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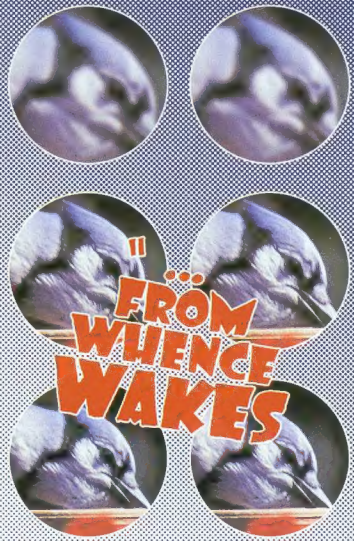
CEREBUS LATTER DAYS 13



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MAY

REVIEW

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It's not often that you'll catch me saying something nice about *The Comics Journal,* but this was an exceptional issue for those of us interested in a more-than-cursory examination of the issues surrounding creators' rights in the comic-book field. "Creators Trounced!" trumpets the cover copy. Fortunately, the articles within (Bob Levin on the Air Pirates vs. Disney and Marv Wolfman's lawsuit against Marvel) are bereft of such hyperbole. Both are also "part 2" but sufficiently self-contained to make the absence of their respective "parts 1" all but unnoticeable.

The Air Pirates, counter-culturalist holdovers from the sixties (consisting of Dan O'Neill, Ted Richards, Bobby London, Gary Hallgren and Shary Flenniken), made their mark in the 70s by producing underground comix parodies of Walt Disney characters that were visually identical to the seminal Disney look of the 1920s and 30s: the parody being entirely in the literary content ("The whole world thinks I'm cute, so *why* won't Minnie fuck me? Why won't *anybody* fuck me?"). Bob Levin interviewed most of the principals involved and gathered quotes from a variety of published sources to assemble a fascinating document about one of the first "creators' rights" legal battles to come out of the comic-book field. Certain central points are, in my view, glossed over. Ron Turner of San Francisco's Last Gasp Publishing, long credited as the Air Pirates' publisher rather cagily (according to the article) only provided financing in exchange for copies of the books, thus assuring himself a profit while guaranteeing that the Air Pirates alone would be left "holding the bag" when Disney, inevitably, came knocking at the door ("One of O'Neill's most repeated tales is that, despite a San Francisco phone book listing for 'Air Pirates Secret Hideout,' it took Disney four months to serve its complaint.")

Marv Wolfman vs. Marvel (court transcripts of all the supporting testimony at the trial) should be required reading for all those creators who, determined to work for Marvel and DC, insist that they are "going in with their eyes open." Here's what happened to a former *editor-in-chief* at Marvel when one of the supporting cast in his 70-issue *Dracula* series, a black vampire called Blade, got tapped for the Hollywood mega-hit treatment. Very little that's new is discussed but it is interesting to watch the truth slowly dawn on Marv and his defenders that they are, legally, on the wrong side of the argument.

When you order your copy? Tell 'em Dave sent you.

CEREBUS
NO. 278 MAY 2002

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Characters/
pencil & ink,
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Cover Photo

LATTER DAYS

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PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 266
and 267)

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 268 to
288)

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 289 to
300)

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DAVE SIM AND GERHARD

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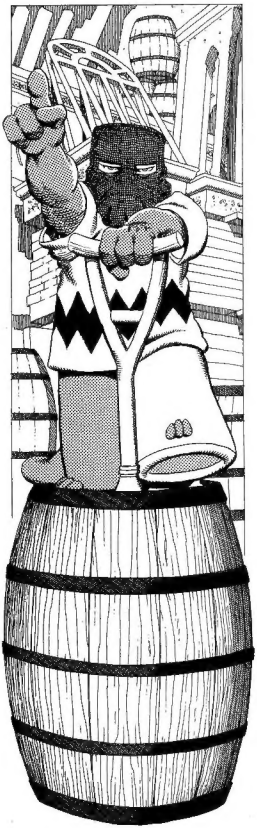
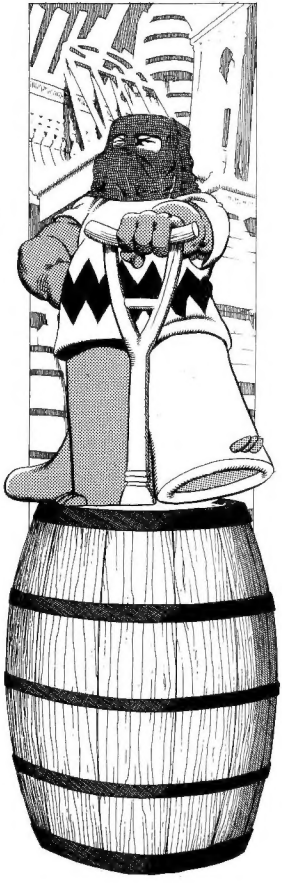
17: But before the men couldst begin
to build manie louelie small houses
Cerebbs spake vnto them saying, Build ye
up stronge holdes for thyselues aswell.
Verily, each Cerebite shalt haue a stronge
holde for himselfe like vnto a house
(howsobeit for a man onely).
18: And if thou takest a wife vnto thyselfe
and (being an Angel) shee doeth agree to
liue with thee in thy stronge holde & to
serue thee and herselfe and thy
children;
19: Or if after thou art wed
shee choosest to remaine in her
house & thou choosest to remaine in thy
stronge holde & both of thee choosest
to haue sleepe ouers
onely;
20: Or if shee choosest to serue herselfe & thy
children in her house & thou choosest to serue
thyselfe onely in thy stronge holde;
21: Or if shee choosest to serue herselfe onely
in her house & thou choosest to serue thyselfe
& thy children in thy stronge holde;
22: Then thou art a Cerebite & thou shalt
uote on those matters which doth concerne what is
and what is not to bee done & thou shalt
become once a year one of Spore's Spores
for ye cleansing of ye lande.
23: Howsoeuer if thou choosest to
leaue thy stronge holde and
thou choosest to moue
into the house of a woman or an Angel then
thou art no more a Cerebite but thou art
a husband onely & like as the women haue
no uote and become not one of Spore's
Spores so too shall ye not haue a uote
& so too shall ye not become one of
Spore's Spores.
24: To bee a Cerebite



thy wife hast onely to
stand before all the people of thy lande
& before thee and declare, The
place in which we liue is
my husband's stronge holde & not
my house.
25: If thy wife doeth declare that the place
where thou doest liue is both stronge holde
& house or doeth declare that it is neither
stronge holde nor house or if shee doeth declare
it a house onely then thou art not a Cerebite
but thou art a husband onely & thou shalt
haue no uote & thou shalt not become
one of Spore's Spores for ye
cleansing of ye lande.
26: Howsoeuer if thou shalt come to
thy senses and leaue the house of
the woman in the which thou hast
bene liuing or if thou diuorce thy wife who
declarest the place in which
thou liuest to be neither house
nor stronge holde or both house
& stronge holde or her house or a house
onely and if thou then returnest
vnto thy stronge holde either alone or
with a woman or an Angel who
doeth declare before thee
& before all the people of thy lande
that the place where thou
doeth liue with her is thy stronge
holde;
27: Then thou shalt bee once more a
Cerebite and thou shalt haue a uote
& thou shalt become one of Spore's
Spores for ye cleansing of ye
lande.
28: And no harme shal come to those who
are women & husbands onely. They
shal be treated as if they were women or
Angels hauing ye same rights



in al things except that they haue
no uote & they become not
Spore's Spores for the cleansing
of the lande.
29: The Cerebite who
shalt harme any woman or any
Angel or any husbande shalt haue his
head blowne off.
30: And these sayings of Cerebus were
well pleasing unto all the Cerebites & the
Angels & the women & the husbands.
31: And the Cerebites didst commence to
build up the lovelie small houses &
the stronge holdes & the Sanctuaries.
32: And when there wast any
disagreement amongst the
Cerebites concerning any
matter in the building up of the
lovelie small houses & the stronge holdes
& the Sanctuaries, they didst take counsel
among themselves and didst uote as to
what was to bee done and what was not
to be done.
33: And those Angels & those women & those
husbands who were childlesse didst
assist the Cerebites in al things
in the building up of the lovelie
small houses & the stronge holdes &
the Sanctuaries.
34: Howsoeuer the Angels & the women &
the husbands who brought foorth
children didst not assist
the Cerebites in the building
and didst performe no labour or taske
of any kinde: saue onely
the rearing of their children until the
daie when their children were growen.

35: And, lo, there was in all those daies and all those nights in al the landes Peace vnto Cerebvs and vnto the Three Wise Fellowes and unto all Angels & all women & all husbands.

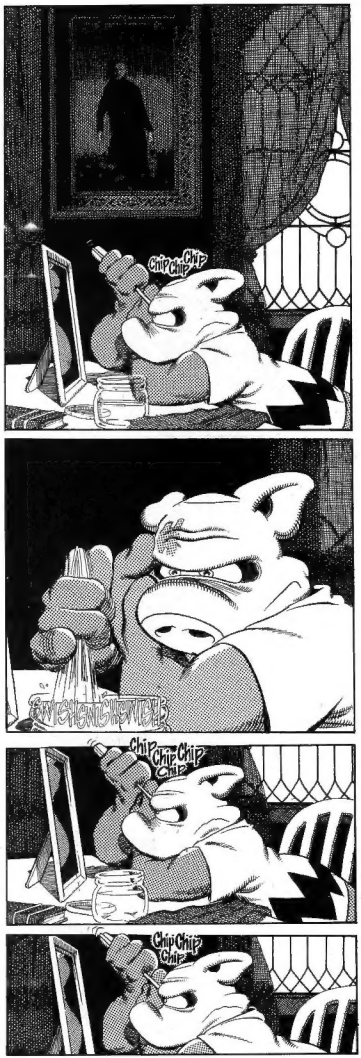
AND IT **WAS** TRUE--WHETHER YOU BELIEVE IT OR **NOT**--THERE **WAS** "PEACE IN ALL THE LANDS" OF COURSE **CEREBUS** (HAVING BEEN PRIME MINISTER) WAS MORE SURPRISED AT THAT THAN **ANYBODY.**

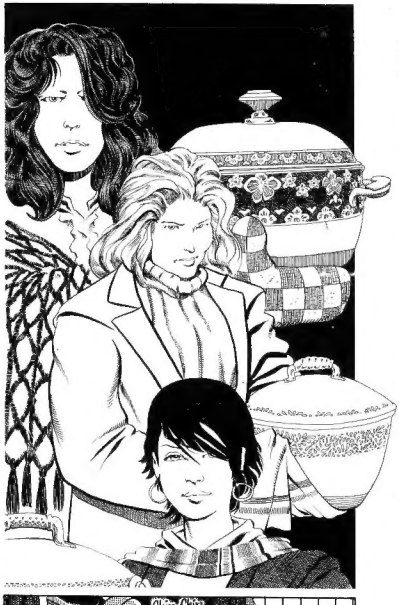
KOSHIE AND CEREBUS HEADED BACK TO THE SANCTUARY WHERE KOSHIE SET UP HIS STUDIO AND STRONGHOLD IN THE OLD GARDENER'S RESIDENCE OUT BACK OF THE SANCTUARY AT THE TOP OF TWO-MILE ROAD.

AND **CEREBUS?**-- WELL-- CEREBUS TOOK OVER KOSHIE AND LOSHIE'S ROOMS BEHIND THE **TABLEAUX OF THE SANCTUARIES** (DOC. 2-119). JUST TEMPORARILY, CEREBUS THOUGHT, WHILE KOSHIE AND LOSHIE WERE GETTING THE LOVELY SMALL HOUSES AND THE STRONGHOLDS AND THE SANCTUARIES UP AND RUNNING (OF COURSE IT TURNED OUT TO BE PERMANENT) (CEREBUS WILL SHOW YOU THE ROOMS IN A LITTLE WHILE-- YOU CAN SEE KOSHIE'S OLD STRONGHOLD AND MOST OF TWO-MILE ROAD FROM THERE) (**AND** THE FORGE OF THE REPENTMENT AND THE FURNACE OF THE ETERNAL FIRE) (RICK 3-515) (KEEP CEREBUS' ROOMS AS WARM AS TOAST YEAR ROUND) (WHAT WAS CEREBUS JUST SAYING?) (OH, **RIGHT!**)

KOSHIE STARTED PAINTING HIS "ANGEL ASTONIED AT THE PROMISE OF A HOUSE" ALTARPIECE AND CEREBUS (OBVIOUSLY) JUST **SAT** IN HERE **WAITING** FOR SOMEONE TO COME ALONG AND **SCREW EVERYTHING UP.**

THE WEIRD THING **WAS:** FOR THE **LONGEST** TIME **NO ONE** CAME ALONG. (WELL, HEH-HEH, EXCEPT FOR ALL THE "**JOANNES**")





SEE -- RIGHT AWAY AFTER THE "LOVELY SMALL HOUSES" ANNOUNCEMENT, THE ANGELS AND WOMEN STARTED **COOKING** FOR THE CEREBITES AND BRINGING THE FOOD TO THE CONSTRUCTION SITES (WHICH -- ON THE ONE HAND -- WAS VERY **NICE** OF THEM AND -- ON THE **OTHER** HAND -- WAS PRETTY **CLEVER** OF THEM) (BECAUSE IT MEANT THAT THE GUYS **DIDN'T** GO INTO THE PUBS AND TAVERNS FOR **LUNCH**) (AND WIND UP STAYING FOR **DINNER** AND **BREAKFAST**) (NNUK-NNUK-NNUK) SO A LOT OF LOVELY SMALL HOUSES GOT BUILT IN A HURRY AND, OF COURSE, FROM WHAT **CEREBUS** HEARD, THERE WAS QUITE A BIT OF FORNICATION GOING ON IN THE BUSHES AROUND THE CONSTRUCTION SITES FOR **BASICALLY** THE SAME REASON. SO

BETWEEN THE HOME COOKING AND THE -- HEH-HEH-- "HOME COOKING," THE CONSTRUCTION SITES WERE **DEFINITELY** THE PLACE TO BE... AND, OF COURSE, THE THE ANGELS AND THE WOMEN MADE SURE THAT THE **FASTEST** WORKERS GOT THE "**FRESHEST**" PIECE OF "**PIE**" (IF YOU CATCH CEREBUS' DRIFT)

WELL, ANGELS AND WOMEN **BEING** ANGELS AND WOMEN, THEY **EVIDENTLY** DECIDED THAT CEREBUS SHOULD GET SOME... "HOME COOKING"... AS WELL. **PROBABLY** (THEY THOUGHT) SO HE WOULDN'T CHANGE HIS MIND ABOUT THE "LOVELY SMALL HOUSES." SO, THE FIRST OF MANY **JOANNES** SHOWED UP AT THE SANCTUARY DOOR WITH **ONE** KIND OF HOME-COOKING IN HER **HANDS** AND THE **OTHER** KIND OF "HOME COOKING" IN HER **EYES.** CEREBUS (HEH-HEH) CEREBUS DIDN'T KNOW **WHAT** TO SAY. FORTUNATELY, A VOICE IN HIS **HEAD** DID SAY: "**THANK YOU FOR THE FOOD -- AND MAY GOD BE PLEASED TO BLESS THEE WITH THE LOVELY SMALL HOUSE OF THY DREAMS!**"

IT WORKED LIKE A **CHARM.**

HER "HOME COOKING" LOOK DISAPPEARED AND WAS (**INSTANTLY**) REPLACED BY HER "**I'M** GETTING A **LOVELY SMALL HOUSE!**" LOOK, AND OFF SHE WOULD GO, HAPPY AS CLAM... WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A "THANK YOU" OR A "GOOD NIGHT" **HEH-HEH-HEH!** THERE MUST'VE BEEN **TWO DOZEN JOANNES** AND IT GOT RID OF EVERY **ONE** OF 'EM! HEH-HEH! JUST. LIKE. **THAT!** BUT...

FINALLY?

FINALLY, IT GOT **SO** QUIET (AFTER GETTING RID OF A DIFFERENT JOANNE EVERY NIGHT) THAT CEREBUS JUST **CRACKED -- PARALYZED** BY THE THOUGHT THAT **SINISTER** BANDS OF **BUREAUCRATS** WERE **CLOSING IN ON CEREBUS** WITH **MINUTE** BOOKS AND... AND **AGENDUMS** AND... AND **POSITION PAPERS** AND... AND **INTERIM BUDGET SHORTFALL ANALYSES!** (SERIOUSLY! IT WAS SUCH A MASSIVE PRIME MINISTERIAL FLASHBACK. CEREBUS THOUGHT HE WAS HAVING A **STROKE**)

REALIZING THAT "**FOREARMED IS FORESKINNED**" (OR -- HOWEVER THAT PHRASE GOES) CEREBUS DECIDED TO "**HEAD THEM OFF AT THE PASS**" BY INITIATING HIS **OWN** SERIOUSLY STUPID PIECE OF **LEGISLATION FIRST** SO THAT **THEY** WOULD ALL HAVE TO DEBATE AND ANNOTATE AND AMEND AND REWORK AND MODIFY AND CODIFY AND... AND...

WELL... IN A NUTSHELL... THAT'S HOW WE ENDED UP WITH THE **SERIOUSLY STUPID CALENDAR** WE'VE GOT -- THE **6/66 CALENDAR** WITH FOUR 91-DAY MONTHS (**WINTER**MONTH, **SPRING**-MONTH, **SUMMER**MONTH AND **STEVE**) AND SIXTY-SIX **SIX-DAY** WEEKS (**ONES**DAY, **TWOS**-DAY, **THREES**DAY, **FOURS**DAY, **FIVES**DAY, **SIX**DAY)

CEREBUS **TELLS** THE NINE (OR SO) CEREBITES HANGING AROUND OUTSIDE THAT HE HAS THIS **MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT** TO MAKE THE NEXT DAY AND FOR THEM TO TELL ALL THE **OTHER** CEREBITES. SO, THE NEXT DAY, WHO SHOWS UP? THE SAME NINE GUYS — WHO PROCEED TO VOTE... **NINE-TO-ZERO...** IN FAVOUR OF WINTER-MONTH, SPRINGMONTH, SUMMERMONTH AND STEVE. SO CEREBUS SAYS TO THEM (HE SAYS) "AREN'T YOU EVEN A **LITTLE** CONCERNED THAT **FOUR** NINETY-ONE DAY MONTHS ADD UP TO THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-**FOUR** DAYS... AND SIXTY-SIX **SIX**-DAY WEEKS ADDS UP TO THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-**SIX** DAYS?" NINE HANDS GO UP. YES, NINE-TO-ZERO, THEY RAISED THEMSELVES AS "**CONCERNED**" OR "**VERY** CONCERNED" THAT THE FOUR-MONTH CALENDAR AND THE **6/66** CALENDAR ADDED UP TWO DIFFERENT WAYS...

...AND THEN THEY JUST... **STARED.** AT CEREBUS UNTIL CEREBUS SAID, "ACTUALLY, '**STEVE**' HAS NINETY-**TWO** DAYS AND THE **FIRST** DAY OF '**WINTERMONTH**' TAKES PLACE BEFORE THE FIRST **ONE!!!**" AND IT'S CALLED **QUARTERDAY** BECAUSE IT'S ONLY SIX HOURS LONG." SOMEBODY ASKED WHAT THE **92ND** OF **STEVE** WAS CALLED, AND CEREBUS SAID, "IT'S CALLED **LITTLE STEVE!**." AND," HE ADDED, "IT IS BETWEEN THE DAWN OF 'LITTLE STEVE' AND THE CLOSE OF 'QUARTERDAY' THAT YE SHALL GO FORTH AS **GORE'S GORES** FOR YE CLEANSING OF YE LAND."

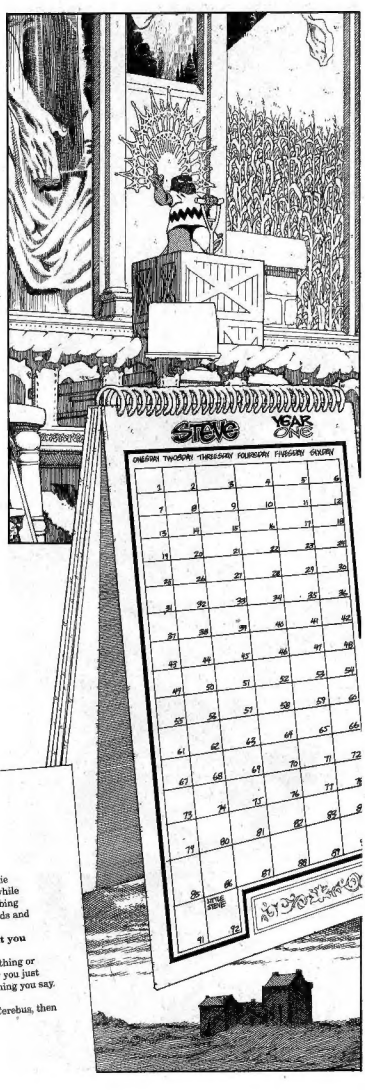
NINE HANDS GO UP... AND THE **FOUR-MONTH 6/66 CALENDAR** IS OFFICIALLY ADOPTED ON:

THREESDAY,
THE **39TH** OF
STEVE.
THE YEAR ONE B.O.C.*
(* BECAUSE OF CEREBUS)

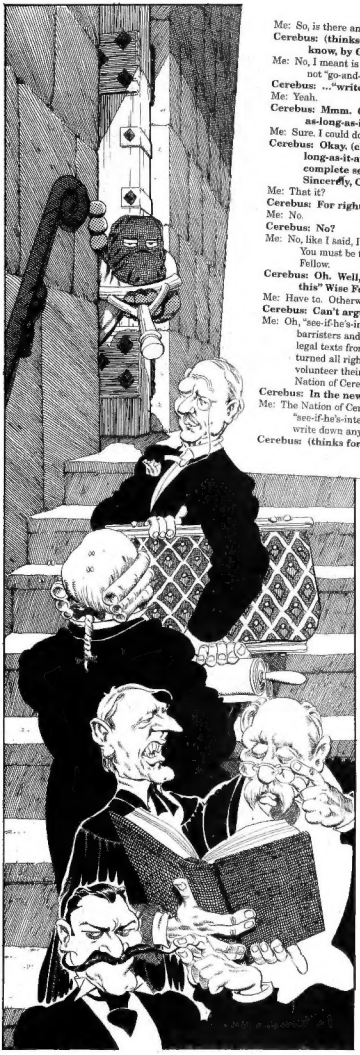
"SO, OKAY," CEREBUS ADMITS TO HIMSELF THE NEXT DAY WHEN SOMEONE DROPS OFF HIS PERSONAL COPY OF THE FOUR-PAGE "**YEAR ONE**" CALENDAR.) "SO MAYBE THIS **ISN'T** GOING TO BE LIKE BEING THE PRIME MINISTER."

LISTEN: CEREBUS WAS HAD TO **PUG LIKE A PANKOVIAN RACEHORSE** FOR THE LAST **HOUR** (HIH-HIH—PARSON CEREBUS' BED JUNGLE AGAIN), BUT HE WAS WAITING UNTIL THE PART WHERE THE "WRITER-DOWNER-OF-EVERYTHING-WHAT-AIN'T-SCRIPTURE" WISE FELLOW SHOWS UP, SINCE YOU CAN READ **THAT** PART FOR **YOURSELF.** CAN CEREBUS BRING YOU ANYTHING ON HIS WAY BACK?.....NO?.....OKAY.

HERE YOU GO. BACK IN A FEW MINUTES



Fourday, 40th of Steve, Year One
Cerebus: (answering the door) Yes?
Me: Hi. I'm the "writer-downer-of-everything-what-isn't scripture" Wise Fellow.
Cerebus: (no answer)
Me: You know. Of the "Legion of Substitute Wise Fellows"?
Cerebus: (no answer)
Me: The, uh, Nine Substitute Wise Fellows that Koshie and Mosher delegated to agree with everything you say while they're busy painting altar pieces, installing indoor plumbing and building the Lovely Small Houses and the Strongholds and the Sanctuaries? We just voted on the new calendar?
Cerebus: Oh. Is that who you guys are? Cerebus thought you were just, you know, hanging around.
Me: Well, yeah, we are. But, basically just until you need something or you want to bring in some kind of non-scriptural rule or you just need a bunch of guys to agree unanimously with something you say.
Cerebus: Oh.
Me: Except, as I say, with Scripture. If it goes in the Book of Cerebus, then I'm supposed to go and get Koshie to write it down.
Cerebus: Oh.

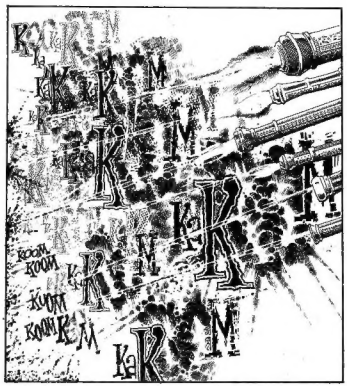


Me: So, is there anything you want?
Cerebus: (thinks) Aye. Cerebus wants a complete set of Rabbi. You know, by Garth Inniscent?
Me: No, I meant is there anything you want me to write down. I'm not "go-and-get-whatever-he-wants-as-long-as-it-ain't-loaded" Wise Fellow, I'm...
Cerebus: ..."writer-downer-of-everything-what-isn't-scripture" Wise Fellow.
Me: Yeah.
Cerebus: Mmm. Could you write a note to "go-and-get-whatever-he-wants-as-long-as-it-ain't-loaded" Wise Fellow?
Me: Sure. I could do that.
Cerebus: Okay. (clears throat) "Dear 'go-and-get-whatever-he-wants-as-long-as-it-ain't-loaded' Wise Fellow: Please go and get Cerebus a complete set of Garth Inniscent's Rabbi. Thank you. Yours Sincerely, Cerebus."
Me: That it?
Cerebus: For *right* now, aye. So you'll see that he gets it?
Me: No.
Cerebus: No?
Me: No, like I said, I'm "writer-downer-of-everything-what-isn't scripture" Wise Fellow. You must be thinking of "see-that-fill-in-the-blank-Wise-Fellow-gets-this" Wise Fellow.
Cerebus: Oh. Well, can you see that "see-that-fill-in-the-blank-Wise-Fellow-gets-this" Wise Fellow gets it?
Me: Have to. Otherwise I'll get fired, won't I?
Cerebus: Can't argue with that. Er. Who are all these guys with you?
Me: Oh, "see-if-he's-interested-in-this" Wise Fellow sent them up. They're lawyers and barristers and solicitors. Evidently they managed to pass down all of the ancient legal texts from generation to generation through the whole "Age which hath overturned all righteousness" preserving them and hiding them. And they've come to volunteer their services in helping to re-institute a Justice System in the New Nation of Cerebus.
Cerebus: In the new...what?
Me: The Nation of Cerebus. That was the first any of us heard of it, either. That's why "see-if-he's-interested-in-this" Wise Fellow figured he'd send them up and get me to write down anything you might have to say to them.
Cerebus: (thinks for a long time) Better get Koshie.

1: And there came unto Cerebvs & vnto ye Sanctvarie & vnto ye Seate of Trueth, ye Lawyers & ye Barristers & ye Solicitors speaking vnto Cerebvs, and saying vnto him:
2: We bee Ye Custodians of Ye Lawes of Aforetimes. Hearken vnto us that al might bee well in the lande.
3: And Cerebvs, remembering ye Lawyers & ye Barristers & ye Solicitors from aforetimes, spake vnto them saying, verily, upon the Fiftieth of Steve thou shalt returne unto Cerebvs, thou and all those who bee Lawyers & Barristers & Soliciters or whoeso desirest to bee so.

4: Come ye hence on that daie vnto ye Sanctvarie & vnto ye Seate of Trueth & Cerebvs wilt inqvire of thee of al that doeth pertaine vnto thy wisdome & thine vnderstanding of the Lawes of Aforetimes & then wilt Cerebvs iudge which one of the hoste of thee shalbe The Fairest of Them All & Cerebvs wilt promote that one vnto great honour and he shal counsel Cerebvs in all which doeth pertaine vnto Ye Lawe & verily that one shall bee closer vnto Cerebvs than Cerebvses righte testicle.

5: And these sayings of Cerebvs were well pleasing vnto al the hoste of them and, lo, they didst returne vnto Cerebvs vpon the Fiftieth of Steve according vnto the worde which Cerebvs didst speake vnto them.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they aggrauating. They are neither annoying nor are they annoyed, whilst the liuing getteth in peoples faces.

10: Blessed art All Dead People for euen iust breathing for seuenty years is a colossal pain in ye butt, though the liuing knoweth it not.

11: Blessed art the stupid for they alwaies getteth a free ride. The doubly stupid art doubly blessed for they are alwaies a problem for others and neuer for themselues.

12: Whether thou art a murderer or a murder uictime, whether thou art dead or whether thou art merely stupid, it maketh no difference vnto Cerebvs: onely bee ye neither a deuill nor a uiper, neither a scorpion nor a Lawyer, neither a Barrister nor a Solicitor.

13: If thine aduersarie is in the way of thee and thou doest desire to kill him or her then doe so. It maketh no difference vnto Cerebvs.

14: If thou doest desire to kill him or her and thou hast not the guttes to do it thyself; then come thee together vnto Cerebvs and Cerebvs wil iudge the cause betweene the two of thee & whomsoeuer Cerebvs findeth to be the more annoying Cerebvs will smite with an iron barre until he or she is dead.

15: And ifsobeit that Cerebvs findeth the two of thee to bee equally annoying, then Cerebvs will smite both of thee with an iron barre until the two of thee shalbe dead. Amen.

16: This shalbe the lawe of the lande
vnto al Cerebites & all Angels &
all women & all husbands. Anytime of
ye daie or night. No appointment
necessary. Some restrictions
may, peraduenture, apply.
17: And Cerebvs and all ye people
of ye lande that night didst burne
all of ye law bookes
and scrolles from aforetimes upon
q great bonnefire.
18: And from that daie forwarde ye
Fiftieth of Steve was declared to bee
Ye Dead Lawyer Daie
with much singing and daunting
and reioicing in all the lande.
19: And, lo, there was again Peace
in all the lande vnto Cerebvs &
Ye Three Wise Fellowes & Ye
Legion of Substitute Wise Fellowes
& al ye Cerebites & ye Angels
& ye women & ye husbandes.

WHEW! THAT'S [illegible] "TEETH [illegible] ? [illegible] THE SERMON ON THE MOUND OF DEAD LAWYERS? [illegible] HIGH-HIGH ... YOU READ FAST.

IT WORKED FOR A WHILE... BUT THEN SOME GUYS STARTED ACTING LIKE COMPLETE DICKS - GOING AROUND KILLING PEOPLE JUST BECAUSE CEREBVS SAID THAT THOSE WHO MURDER CLEANLY ARE BLESSED.

SO CEREBVS HAD TO INSTITUTE THE 'COMPLETE DICK RULE' -- WHERE ANY TWELVE CEREBITES COULD DECLARE A GUY A 'COMPLETE DICK' AND BLOW HIS HEAD OFF

CEREBVS ENOUGHT. IN THE 'COMPLETE DICK' RULE ON THE TWELFTH OF WINTERMONTH IN THE YEAR THREE. OKAY! THAT YEAR, THE CEREBITES BLEW ABOUT A THOUSAND HEADS OFF OF A THOUSAND COMPLETE DICKS.

YEAR FOUR? THEY BLEW TWENTY FIVE HEADS OFF OF TWENTY-FIVE COMPLETE DICKS

BY THE YEAR FIVE, DESTRUCTION WAS COMPLETELY COMPLETE DICK. 'LEGO!

(WHERE WAS CEREBVS GOING WITH THIS?)

OH RIGHT RIGHT RIGHT... 'YOUR QUESTION:' WHY DID CEREBVS STOP TRYING TO REFORM SOCIETY AFTER THE 'SERMON ON THE MOUND OF DEAD LAWYERS'? ..... IS ..... THERE WASN'T ANYTHING TO REFORM! YOU FORGET-- THE SECOND 'CLEANSING OF THE LAND' TOOK PLACE FORTY DAYS AFTER "THE SERMON ON THE MOUND OF DEAD LAWYERS." YOU KNOW HOW MANY DEVILS, VIPERS AND SCORPIONS SUPERB IS SPECIES FOUND OVER LITTLE BITEYE / QUARTERDAY YEAR ONE / YEAR TWO? ..... NONE! ZIP! ZERO!..... SAME WITH THE LAWYERS, BARRISTERS AND SOLICITORS.' AFTER THAT FIRST 'DEAD LAWYER DAY'? THERE WEREN'T ANY MORE LAWYERS! 'REFORM SOCIETY? HAH! YOU GET RID OF YOUR ... [illegible] YOUR BARRISTERS, YOUR SOLICITORS ..... AND WHAT REMAINS IS A COMPLETE DICK ! ' [illegible] DOESN'T NEED REFORMING ..... HE NEEDS THE LOOK AT IT THIS WAY WITH ANY ONE OF THEM ... ANY ONE OF THEM.

IT TAKES NINE MONTHS TO 'HATCH'... AND YEAH, WHAT... AT LEAST EIGHTEEN YEARS TO REACH 'FULL SIZE', RIGHT? SO NONE OF THEM CAN BREED FAST ENOUGH IF YOU'VE GOT A REALLY EFFECTIVE EXTERMINATION PROGRAM IN PLACE

EVERYTHING JUST... WORKED! GUYS USED TO BUILD HOUSES. BUT, MOST OF 'EM ARE HAPPIER LIVING IN THEM DO... WOMEN ARE LOUSY AT BUILDING HOUSES BUT THEY LOVE HOUSES - THEY LOVE LIVING IN 'EM, PAINTING 'EM, DECORATING 'EM AND ... ESPECIALLY ... OWNING 'EM... 'MY HOUSE!' MEN THEY CAN DO WITHOUT. GIVE A WOMAN A CHOICE BETWEEN OWNING A MAN AND OWNING A HOUSE & HAH-HAH "WHAT IS THIS? A TRICK QUESTION?" ... AND GUYS LIKE TO WANDER. HOUSES BRING RUST. THE LONGER THEY WATCH, THE MORE THEY WANT TO PARTICIPATE...

[illegible] AND GET DRUNK. ALL DAY. THE STRONGHOLDS TURNED OUT TO BE A BEDROOM AND A BATHROOM SINCE THAT'S ALL A GUY NEEDS... AND MAYBE ONE OTHER ROOM... FOR HIS HOBBY. IF HE HAS ONE..... BUT MOST GUYS... THEIR HOBBY WAS GOING TO THE TAVERN. HAH-HAH SO A LOT OF THEM NEVER REALLY GAIN THEIR STRONGHOLDS MUCH. MARRIAGE? ...OH SURE, PEOPLE STILL GOT MARRIED. BUT... BUT...!

SEE, THE ONLY THING WOMEN WANT BESIDES HOUSES ARE BABIES. AND BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T ALLOWED TO WORK IF YOU HAD A KID UNTIL THE KID WAS GROWN, THE HUSBANDS WEREN'T A REAL GOOD... ADVERTISEMENT... FOR MARRIAGE TROLLING AROUND BEHIND THEIR WIVES AND KIDS LOOKING LOST AND DEPRESSED. ... GUYS GOT A LOT MORE CAREFUL ABOUT ANDOMG GETTING THE ANGELS AND WOMEN PREGNANT. EIGHTEEN YEARS OF NO BUILDING? EIGHTEEN YEARS OF LIVING IN A TWO-ROOM STRONGHOLD WITH ONLY A WOMAN AND A KID TO TALK TO?... THAT WAS A BIG REASON FOR "BLESSED ARE THE STUPID AND DOUBLY BLESSED ARE THE DOUBLY STUPID". THE GUYS WHO WERE STUPID ENOUGH TO BECOME FATHERS..... WELL... AT LEAST THEY WERE BLESSED, RIGHT? AND IF THEY WERE CONTENT WITH BEING BLESSED FOR BEING STUPID ... WELL.... THAT MEANT THAT THEY WERE DOUBLY STUPID AND, THEREFORE... DOUBLY BLESSED?... AND FOR THOSE FEW HUSBANDS AND FATHERS WHO WEREN'T STUPID ENOUGH TO BE CONTENT WITH THAT? THERE WAS "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO [illegible] ... BUT CAN'T MAKE IT THROUGH THE EIGHTEEN YEARS WITH YOUR WIFE WHINING AND NAGGING AND ALWAYS ASKING STUPID QUESTIONS AND MAKING YOUR HEAD POUND AND YOUR STOMACH ACHE AND... AND ...!"

(WHAT WAS THE OTHER HALF OF YOUR QUESTION?)

OH RIGHT RIGHT RIGHT. "AND WHAT DID CEREBVS DO FOR THE TWENTY YEARS AFTER HE POPPED OUT OF EIGHTS?"

"DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT!" HEH-HEH. YOU MAKE IT SOUND AS IF CERBERUS WAS HIDING FOR TWENTY YEARS. CERBERUS WASN'T HIDING... IT'S JUST THAT MOST PEOPLE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT CERBERUS LOOKS LIKE. SEE, MOST DAYS CERBERUS WOULD GO INTO THE SANCTUARY TO PRAY AND TO LISTEN TO SOMEONE RECITING FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH OR THE BOOK OF CERBERUS. BUT-- REALLY-- MOST PEOPLE THOUGHT-- AND THINK'-- THAT CERBERUS LOOKS LIKE KOSHIE'S PAINTINGS. YOU KNOW. TWO DISEMBODIED THREE-TOED FEET SHIMMERING "HIT" DE-WONE-DONNY-MINTS" AND HOVERING SIX FEET OFF THE GROUND. THAT'S WHO THEY WERE LOOKING FOR IN THE SANCTUARY..... CERBERUS ALWAYS WANTED TO SAY "FEET, FEET..... DOWN HERE!" HEH-HEH

MOST DAYS, AFTER PRAYING, CERBERUS WOULD HEAD OUT TO ONE OF THE CONSTRUCTION SITES -- WHEREVER MOSHIE WAS AND JUST SPEND ALL DAY WATCHING HIM BUILD A HOUSE..... MOSHIE WOULD JUST NOD AND SMILE... AND CERBERUS WOULD NOD AND SMILE BACK... AND THEN, MOSHIE'D GO BACK TO WORK... AND NEVER LOOK AT CERBERUS AGAIN FOR THE REST OF THE DAY. WHICH WAS GREAT..... HE KNEW CERBERUS WAS ONLY THERE TO WATCH HIM WORK. AND, OF COURSE, NO ONE ELSE ON THE SITE KNEW WHO CERBERUS WAS... UNLESS LOSHIE WAS THERE. REALLY... THAT WAS CERBERUS' FAVOURITE THING NEXT TO READING "RABBI" -- WATCHING MOSHIE BUILDING A HOUSE

"SOUND GET WHATEVER HE WANTS AS LONG AS IT AIN'T "DATER" WISE FELLOW FOUND CERBERUS EVERY ISSUE OF "RABBI." THAT WAS WHEN CERBERUS STARTED PRAYING EVERY DAY. HEH-HEH. "PLEASE GOD IF THIS IS A DREAM, DON'T LET CERBERUS WAKE UP!"

WATCHING KOSHIE PAINT.... OF COURSE "WATCHING PAINGATION" WAS A LOT TOUGHER IN KOSHIE'S SPRINGMONTH-- TUM IT WAS ON MOSHIE'S CONSTRUCTION SITE... HEH-HEH... SO CERBERUS DIDN'T SPEND A LOT OF TIME WITH KOSHIE

EVERYONE WAS DOING WHAT THEY WANTED TO DO AND WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE. WITH NO DEVILS OR WHERE TO EXCEPTIONS OR LAWYERS OR BUREAUCRATS OR SOLICITORS OR CORPORATE DICKS IN THE WAY. THE CELESTIALS JUST...TOOK CARE OF THINGS... VOTING IN LITTLE GROUPS: FOOD SHORTAGE IN DEHRADUN? WHO WANTS TO DELIVER SOME FOOD UP TO DEHRADUN? IT WOULD SOUND LIKE FUN TO SOMEBODY. THERE AREN'T A LOT OF PEOPLE STILL AROUND WHO WERE ALIVE BACK THEN... BUT ASK ANYONE WHO WAS THEN, & TELL YOU THE SAME THING: EVERYONE DID WHAT THEY WANTED TO DO AND WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE. OH!

BIRD-WATCHING!

HOW COULD CERBERUS FORGET BIRD-WATCHING? HEH-HEH. THAT WAS SECOND PLACE BEHIND "READING "RABBI" BACK IN THE YEAR... SAY..... SEVEN, NUMBER

"SEE IF HE'S INTERESTED IN THIS" WISE FELLOW. ONE DAY... SENT UP THE GUY WHO ACTUALLY INVENTED BINOCULARS WITH THE FIRST PAIR EVER! WHY DID CERBERUS TAKE TO THEM LIKE A-- HEH-HEH "DUCK TO WATER"? NO IDEA... BUT FOR... LITERALLY YEARS ON END "TAKE-HIM-WHERE-HE-WANTS-TO-GO" WISE FELLOW WOULD TAKE CERBERUS DOWN TO THE FORESTED AREAS IN THE SOUTH

SEE-- BACK THEN...

YOU HAD TO GO PRETTY FAR SOUTH TO FIND ENOUGH WATER... AND TREES... AND UNDERBRUSH FOR REALLY GOOD BIRD-WATCHING ON ACCOUNT OF THE AWFUL DROUGHT... AND I DON'T GET CERBERUS WRONG. EVERYTHING WASN'T PERFECT BACK THEN... HELL, THE DROUGHT IS A GOOD EXAMPLE. IT WENT ON FOR YEARS! THE RED MARCHES-S..... HEH. THAT'LL SHOW YOU HOW OLD CERB ELIS IS. THE WESTERN PLAINS WERE JUST BONE DRY... FOREVER!... LONGEST THERE WASN'T ENOUGH RAIN FROM SPRINGMONTH TO THE END OF SITHS TO SLICK YOUR HAIR BACK!

(WHERE WAS CERBERUS GOING WITH THAT?)

RIGHT! BIRD-WATCHING! CERBERUS JUST COULDN'T GET ENOUGH OF IT. (WHICH MUCH CARED WHAT THE BIRDS WERE CALLED? STILL DON'T. HEH-HEH. AS CERBERUS USED TO SAY, CERBERUS IS A BIRD-WATCHER... NOT A BIRD NAME-DROPPER!) ... IT WAS THE WINGS. MORE THAN ANYTHING..... THEY LOOKED JUST LIKE THE ANGELS' WINGS IN KOSHIE'S PAINTINGS WHICH-- HEH-HEH-- WHICH ONLY MADE SENSE, YOU KNOW..... SINCE THAT WAS WHAT KOSHIE WAS PAINTING FROM. HE ALWAYS HAD BIRDS IN HIS STRONGHOLD... IN CAGES. BUT IT JUST WASN'T THE SAME..... THEIR WINGS NEVER LOOKED THE SAME IN A CAGE AS THEY DID OUTDOORS AGAINST THE SKY AND THE TREES AND...

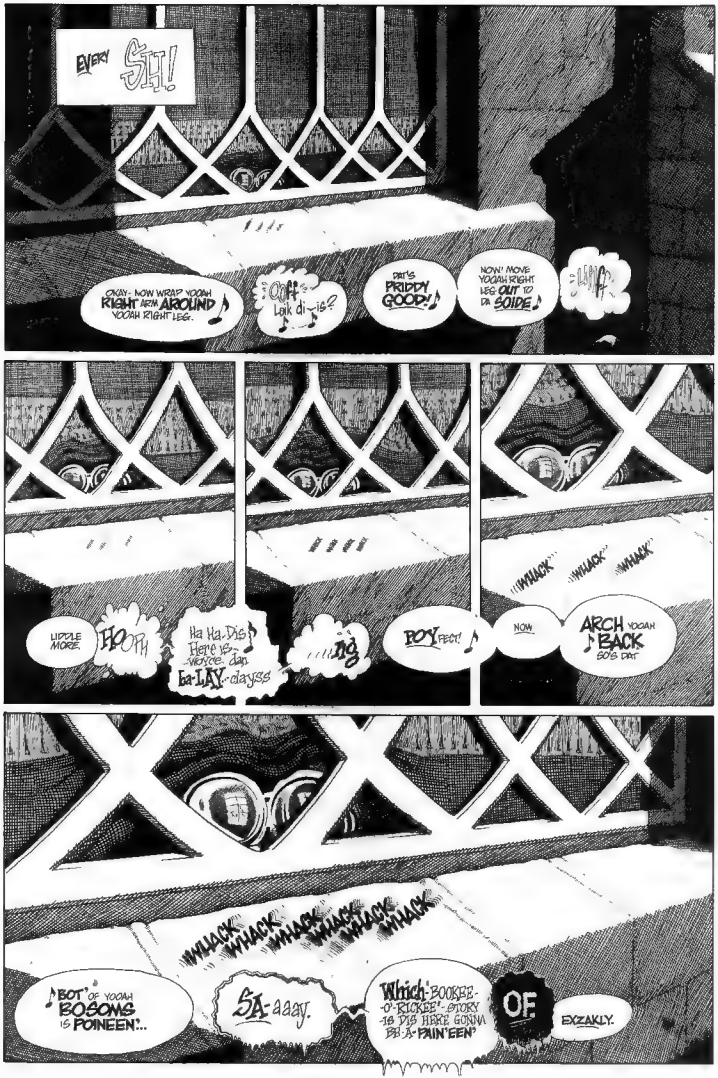
... OF COURSE NOWADAYS WITH EVERYTHING HAVING GOTTEN SO LUSH AND GREEN AROUND THE SANCTUARY, THERE'S GONE FAR AWAY GOOD BIRD-WATCHING RIGHT OUTSIDE THAT DOOR... JUST A WAYS DOWN TWO-MILE ROAD..... ESPECIALLY IN THE SPRINGMONTH RIGHT AROUND THE FORTIETH TO THE FORTY-SIXTH

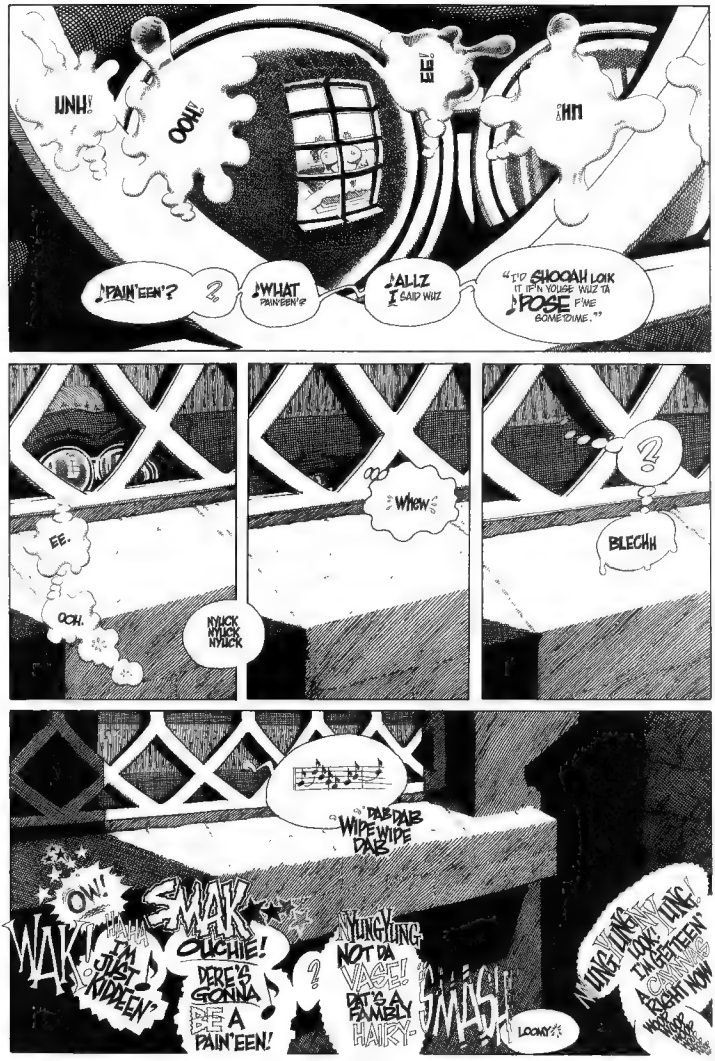
BUT... WAY BACK WHEN... DURING THAT AWFUL DROUGHT ...AS CERBERUS SAID... YOU HAD TO GO AS FAR SOUTH AS WHERE PALNU... USED TO BE

OF COURSE CERBERUS NEVER STAYED DOWN THERE. ..... COULD HAVE..... JUST GONE TO A NICE INN AND TAKEN OVER THE PROPRIETOR'S APARTMENT FOR THE NIGHT... THE WAY THAT... CERBERUS AND U AND... OTHER... FAMOUS PEOPLE DO

BUT... FOR SOME REASON... HEH-HEH... CERBERUS ALWAYS WANTED TO HEAD BACK TO THE

(WHICH WHICH WHICH!) "FOR SOME REASON"? SH! (WHAT'S THE ONE REASON CERBERUS HAD TO BE BACK IN THE SANCTUARY EVERY) SH!


EVERY SH!
OKAY. NOW WRAP YOOAH RIGHT ARM AROUND YOOAH RIGHT LEG.
Off
Lok di-is?
DAT'S PRIDDY GOOD!
NOW! MOVE YOOAH RIGHT LEG OUT TO DA SOIDE
LITTLE MORE.
HOOFH
Ha Ha-Dis? Here is-nicece- dan Ea-LAY--dayss
ING
POY FECK!
NOW
WHACK WHACK WHACK
ARCH YOOAH BACK SO'S DAT
WHACK WHACK WHACK WHACK WHACK WHACK
'BOT' OF YOOAH BOSOMS IS POINEEN'?..
SA-aaay.
Which-BOOKEE-O-RICKEE'-STORY-IS DIS HERE GONNA BE A PAIN'EEN?
OF
EXZAKLY.


UNH!
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WHAT
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ALLZ I SAID WUZ
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EE.
OCH.
NYUCK NYUCK NYUCK
WHEW
?
BLECHH
DAB DAB WIPE WIDE DABS
OW!
WAK
HAHA I'M JUST KIDDEEN'
SWAK
OUCHIE!
DERE'S GONNA BE A PAIN'EEN!
?
YUNG YUNG NOT DA VASE!
DAT'S A PAWFULLY HAIRY-
SMASH
LOOKY!
YUNG YUNG LOOK! I'M GETTEEN' CRANKY! A RIGHT NOW

SORRY, HAH-HEH - CEREBUS WAS DAY-DREAMING THERE. FOR A MINUTE... SO... AYE... THAT WAS ABOUT IT: WATCHING MOSHIE BUILDING HOUSES, RE-READING, "RUBBA", DRAWING ... BIRD-WATCHING. THE DAYS AND WEEKS AND MONTHS AND YEARS JUST FLEW BY.

IN FACT, THE NEXT YOU KNOW) **EVENT** WASN'T UNTIL THE "**10:13 CRISIS**" IN THE YEAR TWELVE...

...WHICH STARTED WITH THE ARRIVAL OF A LETTER FROM THE QUASI-NATION AND/OR DOMINION OF NORTHERN IGSHURIA, ADDRESSED TO "CEREBUS -- OF THE SANCTUARY AND OF THE SEAT OF TRUTH -- AND TO THE THREE WISE FELLOWS." "DEAREST SIRS," (IT BEGAN) "IT IS WITH SINCEREST REGRET THAT WE HEREBY ADVISE YOU OF OUR INTENTION OF BEHAVING TOWARDS YOU IN A LESS-THAN-COMPLETELY-AMICABLE FASHION AND TO FURTHER SUGGEST TO YOU THAT AN UNINTENDED RESULT OF THIS MIGHT BE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF UNPLEASANTNESS FOR WHICH WE (IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS) APOLOGIZE IN ADVANCE, WE EARNESTLY IMPLORE YOU TO CONSIDER (AT YOUR CONVENIENCE) THAT IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT OF NORTHERN IGSHURIA WHICH WAS THE FIRST OF ANY INDEPENDENT QUASI-NATION OR DOMINION TO VOTE FOR OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF THE LEGITIMACY OF YOUR CLAIM TO BE OF THE SANCTUARY AND OF THE SEAT OF TRUTH."

(CEREBUS WAS **AMAZED!** HE HAD **NO** IDEA THAT THERE **WERE** ANY INDEPENDENT NATIONS -- LET ALONE THAT THEY **VOTED** ON THINGS!)

"HOPING THAT THIS COMMUNICATION FINDS YOU IN GOOD HEALTH, WE AGAIN EXPRESS TO YOU OUR SINCEREST APOLOGIES FOR WHAT COULD WELL BE AN ILL-ADVISED AND IMPETUOUS UNDERTAKING ON OUR PART. TO WHICH, WE BELIEVE (PERHAPS MIS-TAKENLY) YOU HAVE LEFT US NO ALTERNATIVE." "(IT CONCLUDED), "VERY SINCERELY YOURS, ETC. ETC."

("**GOOD** HEALTH"? "ILL-ADVISED **AND** IMPETUOUS"? FOR NORTHERN IGSHURIANS THAT WAS THE SAME AS **FOAMING AT THE MOUTH!**")

WHEN WORD CAME THAT LITERALLY **DOZENS** OF NORTHERN IGSHURIANS HAD BEEN SIGHTED MARCHING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE **SANCTUARY**, CEREBUS ORDERED MOSHIE, LOSHIE AND KOSHIE TO SADDLE UP THE THREE WISE HORSES SO WE COULD ROCK OUT AND "HEAD 'EM OFF AT THE PASS!" WOOP! WOOP! WOOP!

NOT THAT THERE WAS ANY **PHYSICAL** DANGER. THE NORTHERN IGSHURIANS HAD OUTLAWED GUNS, HUNTING-LODGED, KNIVES, FORKS, "NEEDLESSLY SHARP" SPOONS (AS WELL AS "SPEAKING TO CHILDREN, ANIMALS AND/OR PLANTS IN A TONE OF VOICE TENDING TO IMPLIE A STATE OF ALARM") IN THE YEAR FOUR (LIKE ONE OF MANY LITTLE KNOWN FACTS CEREBUS LEARNED FROM READING A COPY OF **The Not-Actually-Revised-As-Much-As-Further-Clarified Little-Known Facts About Northern Igshuria Guide (Oh-Not-At-All-the-Pleasure-Was-Entirely-Our-Own-We-Assure-You)** WHICH "SEE IF HE IS INTERESTED IN THIS" WISE FELLOW RUSHED UP FROM SOMEWHERE FOR CEREBUS TO READ ON THE TRIP NORTH.)

NAH, THE BIGGEST CONCERN (AS ALWAYS) IN DEALING WITH THE NORTHERN IGSHURIANS (AS ALWAYS) WAS JUST FINDING-OUT **WHAT** (IN THE HECK) THEY WERE SO **DARNED UPSET ABOUT THIS** TIME. THEY WERE SO QUIET AND POLITE USUALLY THAT WHENEVER THEY DID GET UPSET, YOU COULD BE SURE OF ONLY **ONE** THING: SOMEONE ELSE BESIDES THE NORTHERN IGSHURIANS WAS TO BLAME AND SOMEBODY BETTER **FIX** IT BEFORE EVERYONE IN EGTHROON JUST COLLAPSED UNDER THE **SHEER WEIGHT** OF **COLLECTIVE GUILT** WHICH RESULTED FROM **KNOWING** THAT SOME **ONE**, SOME**WHERE** HAD DONE SOME**THING** TO **UPSET** THE NORTHERN IGSHURIANS

WE ACTUALLY ENDED UP HAVING TO CAMP ON THE WESTERN PLAINS FOR THE BETTER PART OF THREE WEEKS JUST BECAUSE CEREBUS MADE THE MISTAKE OF INVITING THE NORTHERN IGSHURIANS TO THE SANCTUARY TO DISCUSS WHATEVER IT WAS THAT THEY WERE SO UPSET ABOUT) INSTEAD OF LETTING THEM MARCH ON THE SANCTUARY AND THEN LETTING THEM IN WHEN THEY GOT THERE. "OH, NO... WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY." NONSENSE -- WE'D JUST BE PUTTING YOU OUT." THANK YOU ALL THE SAME, BUT, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED IT'S PROBABLY FOR THE BEST IF WE JUST TURN RIGHT AROUND AND GO HOME AND STOP BEING SUCH A BOTHER... WE'D JUST BE KEEPING YOU FROM SOMETHING IMPORTANT. THANK YOU, ANYWAY."

THREE WEEKS LATER, HAVING SIGNED THE "**BILATERAL ASSURANCE PACT**" SPECIFYING THAT WE HAD PLENTY OF ROOM AND THAT IT WAS -- REALLY -- CROSS-OUR-HEARTS-AND-HOPE-TO-DIE NO TROUBLE AT ALL AND WE'D ONLY BE "PUT OUT" IF THEY **DIDN'T** COME - AND HAVING FINALLY GOTTEN THEM **TO** THE SANCTUARY, KOSHIE OVERHEARD ONE OF THEM SAY TO ANOTHER ONE OF THEM, "SO YOU THINK THEY'RE JUST POSTPONING NOT TO KNOW THAT THIS IS ABOUT **KICK 10:13?**" AND KOSHIE (OF COURSE) SAYS, "KICK 10:13? WHAT **ABOUT** KICK 10:13?"

SO THE GUY TURNS **BEET RED** FROM EMBARRASSMENT AND **HURLS** HIMSELF THROUGH THE NEAREST WINDOW -- PLUNGING SIX OR SEVEN STORIES TO HIS DEATH ON THE COURTYARD FLAGSTONES BELOW

A TRAGEDY, FOR SURE! BUT AT LEAST WE FINALLY **HAD** A **CLUE!**

SO THEN **ALL** OF OUR GUYS WERE POKING OVER OUR COPIES OF THE "**LITTLE-KNOWN FACTS ABOUT NORTHERN IGSHURIA GUIDE**" AND READING (AND/RE-READING AND/RE-RE-READING) KICK 10:13, "TRYING" TO FIGURE OUT "**WHAT**" THE PROBLEM WAS.....

.....FINALLY, ABOUT A WEEK LATER, CEREBUS FIGURED IT OUT. SO WE GATHERED ALL OF THE NORTHERN IGSHURIANS TOGETHER AND SAID TO THEM:

"IT'S BECAUSE KICK PUT **FIVE-BAR-GATE THIRD--AFTER** FOOD AND DRINK, **ISN'T IT?**"

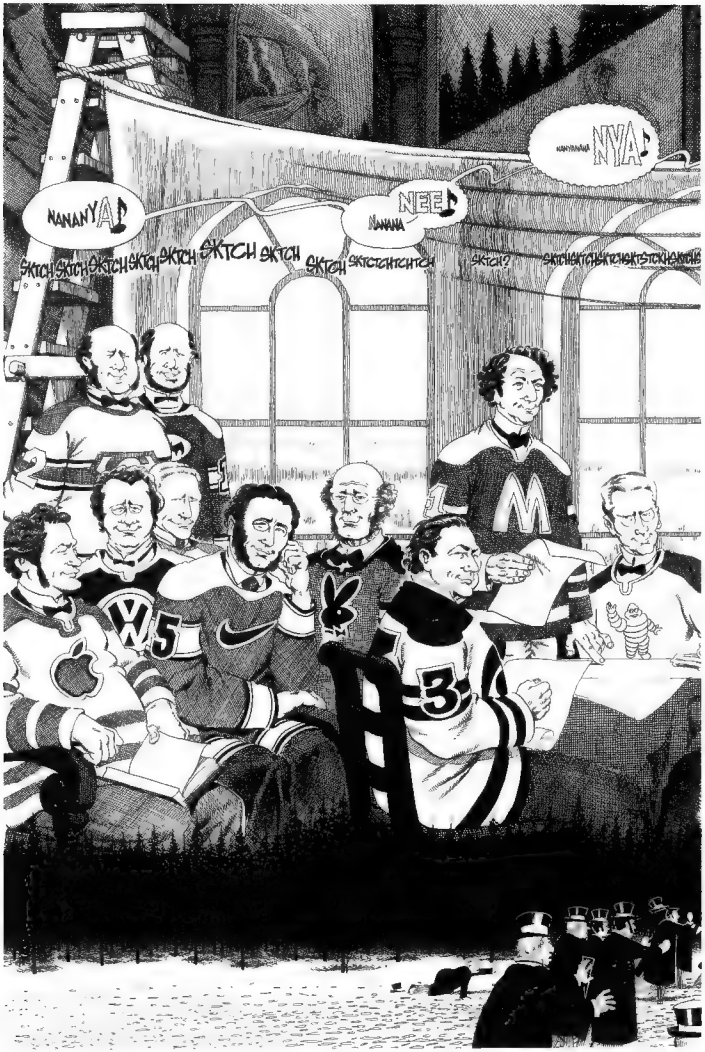
FIVE OF THEM RAN TO THE NEAREST WINDOW AND LEAPT TO THEIR DEATHS. SIX OF THEM HAD HEART ATTACKS AND JUST UP AND DIED RIGHT THERE ON THE SPOT... AND THE REST OF 'EM JUST MADE THESE HORRIBLE **WHEEZING** AND/**RATTLING** NOISES (TRYING NOT TO CRY) SO THAT TOLD CEREBUS THAT HE HAD PRETTY MUCH HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD.

"WELL, SORRY, GUYS," (CEREBUS SAID), "IT'S **SCRIPTURE!** CEREBUS CAN'T JUST **CHANGE** PART OF THE BOOK OF KICK JUST BECAUSE IT UPSETS A BUNCH OF NORTHERN IGSHURIANS," (ADDING) (WHEN THEY ALL STARTED LOOKING REALLY HURT) "EVEN THOUGH NORTHERN IGSHURIANS ARE **SUPER-NICE PEOPLE!**" (WHEN THAT MADE THEM LOOK A LOT LESS HURT, CEREBUS) (REMEMBERING THE "LITTLE-KNOWN WAYS TO FLATTER NORTHERN IGSHURIANS" CHAPTER) (ADDED:) "**WORLD-CLASS SUPER-NICE PEOPLE!**"

CEREBUS, **SHOULD** WE READ THE FOOTNOTE UNDER THE "WORLD CLASS" REFERENCE: "WARNING! REFERRING TO A NORTHERN IGSHURIAN AS "WORLD CLASS" CAUSES THE CITIZENS OF THAT QUASI-NATION TO BOND WITH THE SPEAKER OF THAT REFERENCE IMMEDIATELY AND PERMANENTLY! DO NOT USE THE TERM 'WORLD CLASS' UNLESS YOU ARE PREPARED TO ENTER INTO AN INESCAPABLE COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM, HER OR THEM."

SURE ENGLISH, SIX MONTHS LATER NOT ONE OF THE NORTHERN IGSHURIANS HAD SHOWN THE SLIGHTEST INTENTION OF LEAVING THE SANCTUARY (INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER AND MOST OF HIS CABINET)

FINALLY, CEREBUS HAD TO GET KOSHIE TO PAINT A BIG PICTURE OF A BUNCH OF THEM -- EACH WEARING HIS FAVOURITE FIVE-BAR-GATE PLAYER'S SWEATER...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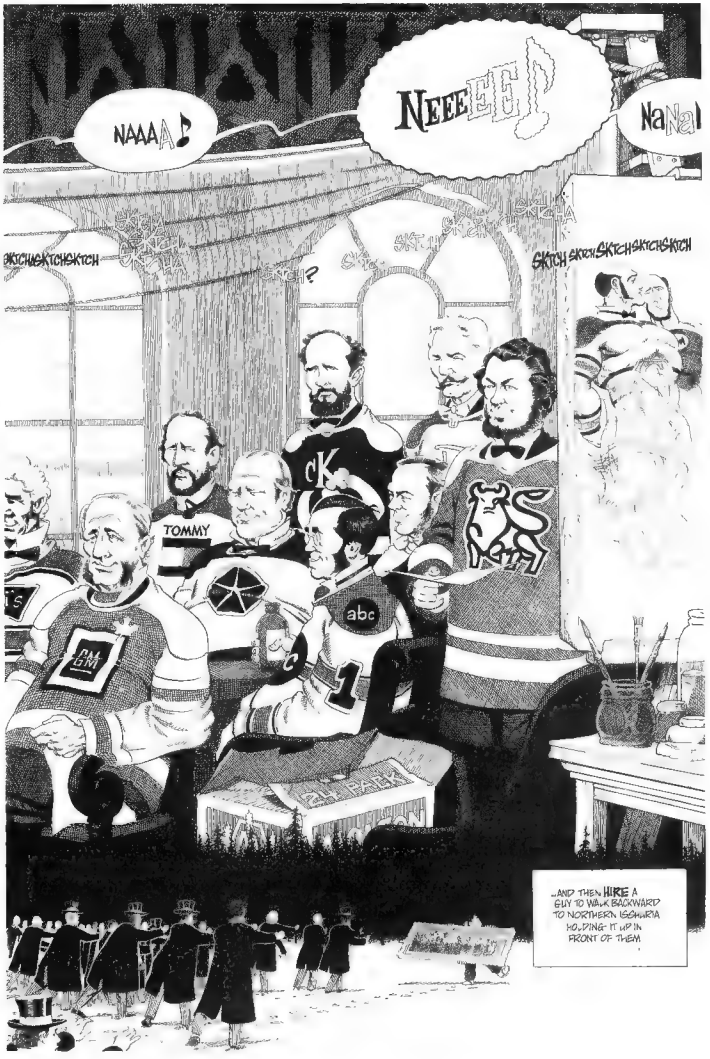
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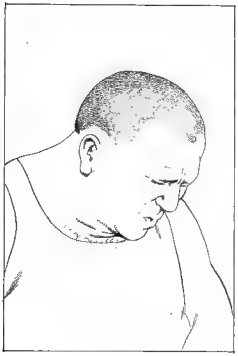
...AND THEN HIRE A GUY TO WALK BACKWARD TO NORTHERN ISCHURIA HOLDING IT UP IN FRONT OF THEM.

THE NEXT EVENT...? AFTER THE "10.15 CRISIS"... ?

THAT WOULD BE THE FIFTY-NINTH OF SPRING/MONTH IN THE YEAR EIGHTEEN.

THAT WAS THE DAY...



KOSHE HAD HIS STROKE.

essay

Islam, My Islam

In the aftermath of the Battle of Badr, the Prophet ceased dressing his hair in the Jewish manner and was advised by the archangel Gabriel to change the direction of the *qibla* (the prostrations in prayer) from Jerusalem to Mecca. He seized on a relatively minor incident to bring hostilities with the Banu Qainoqa (one of the Jewish tribes of Medina) to a head, laying siege to their fortresses. When the other two Jewish tribes refused to come to their aid, they were easily overcome and banished by the Prophet (after he had seized their property—including the weapons whose crafting had been their livelihood—and distributed it among the faithful). He made the offer that they could remain in Medina and have their property restored to them if they would profess Islam. Not for the last time in the history of the Muslim faith, the Jews—to a man—declined the offer.

When one of the two remaining tribes, the Banu Nadhir, were also banished they "were permitted to take only their naked bodies and the ancient faith of their fathers into banishment." In their case only two members of the entire numerous tribe professed Islam and were richly rewarded by the Prophet.

In November 624, Muhammad sent his adopted son, Zaid, into the desert together with one hundred soldiers in order that they might attack a caravan and secure its wealth. Zaid was singularly successful and at Qarada, not far from Mecca, he attacked the autumn caravan of the Koreish. The merchants fled and the entire caravan fell into the hands of the Muslims. Gold and silver in the amount of two hundred thousand dollars was secured by the pious and the sum, after one fifth had been given to the Prophet, was divided among the faithful.

Muhammad's prestige among the tribes of the desert was unlimited. At first it had been feared that all Mecca would appear at the gates of Medina to seek vengeance. Month after month passed and nothing stirred in the direction of the Kaaba. Apparently one could plunder the Meccan caravans without fear of retribution.

At the expiration of five months after this robbery had occurred, a stranger rode through the streets of Medina and requested to be brought before the Prophet. It was a messenger from his Uncle Abbas, the leader of the Hashim. The sly banker, who was fully informed as to all which took place in Mecca, wished to assure his own future and had sent an important message to his nephew who had gradually risen to power.

Abu Sofyan, accompanied by three thousand warriors, was on his way to Medina.

The great robbery was to be followed by a great revenge.

Three thousand warriors was, to say the least, an unheard-of size of force in the Arab world—and the fact that they were led by Abu Sofyan, the undisputed leader of the Koreish (upon the death of Abu Djal) indicated the seriousness of the threat. The faithful gathered in the courtyard of the mosque, where Muhammad told them of his dream:

"I saw myself," he told them, "clad in an invulnerable coat of mail. My sword was broken at the hilt, but nevertheless I was able to kill a ram." "What does this dream signify?" asked the faithful. "We must remain in the city," replied the Prophet. "She is our coat of mail and though poorly armed we can defeat the enemy."

But the faithful, who were accustomed to success and victory, were not at all pleased with the plan. "Why should we allow our fields to be destroyed?" they asked. "Why should we not confront the enemy as is worthy of men? Does not God safeguard our weapons?" The enthusiasm of his men was so great that the Prophet was forced to accede to their demands. Having prayed, he put on his coat of mail and reviewed his army in the great square of Medina.

A thousand Muslim warriors departed that night for Mt. Ohod to meet the Koreish.

When the faithful saw the superior forces of the Koreish, they said, "The messenger of God was right, we would do better to defend ourselves within the city." Then Muhammad arose and declared, "When the messenger of God has put on his coat of mail, he will not take it off."

When the morning dawned, Abdallah ben Obayy, the leader of the munafiqun, *and three hundred of his hypocrites arose; ben Obayy said, "The Prophet has acted upon the advice of children; we cannot follow him." And they left the army and returned to Medina.*

On the morning of the next day, three thousand Meccans confronted the seven hundred faithful. On this occasion the army of Mecca was again unorganized and without discipline. For this reason it had brought Hind and many other fashionable Koreishite ladies along to encourage their warriors. The women called out for revenge and were more bloodthirsty than the men.

Their songs were to the effect that if the soldiers were this time to take refuge again in flight they would not be permitted to rest at the sides of their wives.

Mt. Ohod ended as a defeat for Muhammad and the Muslims. On the cusp of victory, they had begun looting the camp of the Koreish warriors only to have the Koreish army rallied by Kahlid ben el Walid's cavalry and the Muslims themselves put to flight—barely able to hold their ground before the tent of the Prophet. The Muslim cause seemed lost.

A miracle happened. Instead of following the enemy with his victorious army, instead of pressing on to Medina and destroying Islam for all times, Abu Sofyan remained on Mt. Ohod [and] *declared that he would return in a year to complete his victory.*

The Meccan women fell upon the bodies of the fallen Muslims like a horde of wild hyenas. The Oriental intoxication of victory began. Lips, ears, noses and the privates were cut off from the bodies. Hind, the wife of Abu Sofyan, even tore the liver out of the corpse of Hamza and ate it before the eyes of the astonished Meccans. Then she climbed on top of Mt. Ohod and cried out into the darkness, "We have paid you back for the day of Badr. I could no longer endure the pain caused by the loss of my father, my brother and my son. My heart has been lightened. Hamza healed my heart when I tore the liver out of his body."

In the aftermath of the Battle of Mt. Ohod, the Hypocrites and the Banu Nadhir entered into a conspiracy against the Prophet which came to nothing. It was at this point, as mentioned earlier, that the Banu Nadhir were exiled from Medina.

That left only the Banu Qoraidha, of the original three Jewish tribes in Medina.

Piety and a hunger for booty now dominated life in Medina, the two bound inextricably together. The infidels had been exiled and the military strength which had failed against the Meccan army proved more than sufficient to impoverish the surrounding nomadic bedouin tribes. The Word of God now superseded the Arab blood loyalty which had sheltered Muhammad in Mecca. Piety and booty. Distributing looted goods to the faithful solidified their faith and attracted converts. The pious city of the Prophet slowly began to change and become more worldly and affluent.

And so it came about that a series of precepts which were born of the need of the hour were established and were destined to place the minor Babylon under the yoke of stricter morals. These laws were always revealed at a propitious moment. This assured to Muhammad the consent of the sensible ones.

When, for example, one of the faithful was carried away by a suddenly awakened lust for gambling and lost his entire fortune, which he had earned on the battle fields, to some infidel,

Muhammad assembled the faithful, told them of the sad incident and then forbade all gambling for the future. On another occasion, when one of the faithful appeared at prayer completely intoxicated and disturbed the Prophet in his sermon, Muhammad forbade the use of alcohol. In this manner, Muhammad arranged the life of his city. The laws, which were to assure these regulations, remained for all times and ruled the life of the Muslims. Later they formed the entire spiritual picture of Islam.

As for Muhammad…

Neither power nor wealth changed the Prophet. True, each campaign and each battle brought him in one-fifth of the booty, for it was his prayers and not the courage of the soldiers which brought about victories, but even that one-fifth was distributed among the poor or used to reward the particularly pious and courageous.

He did not change his own manner of living. As in the earlier times of his poverty, deprivations and persecution, the Prophet arose at the break of day, cleaned the courtyard, mended his own clothes and said his morning prayers. When pious students arrived, he spoke to them about the faith, alms were distributed and future campaigns discussed. Daily the Prophet in his worn-out clothes held court in the yard of the mosque and rendered his decisions as the highest authority in matters both worldly and spiritual.

It is worth noting, I think, particularly in this day and age when so much is made—by bloodthirsty Arabs and deluded "Muslims"—of the more militant suras in the Koran that, by this point, the characteristics of the suras changed dramatically. At this point the Koran…

...no longer contained flaming threats and avowals, now it merely revealed laws. The word of the law was clear and objective. Unchanged were the power of the expression, the force of the iron sentences, unchanged the visits of the Archangel who brought the words of God to Muhammad in short, terse verses. In time the Archangel became a daily manifestation for Muhammad. He appeared, visible to the Prophet alone, in assemblies, in the house, or on a ride through the desert. Sometimes the angel assumed the form of a man, that of a friend of the Prophet's, Dahki el Kelbi. The Prophet recognized the Archangel in every form, he spoke with him, received his commands and revealed the laws in glowing verses to the pious faithful.

Meanwhile, the newly-exiled Banu Nadhir tribe had sought and found asylum and protection in the prosperous colony of Khaibar, a group of oases owned and controlled by Jews who were described as noble and courageous warriors. By all accounts, they were more than glad to have the Banu Nadhir as guests and gave them land and palms, built houses for them and promised them protection. For, as first emerges at this point in the biography of Muhammad, the Banu Nadhir were direct descendants of Aaron, the older brother of Moses and the first High Priest of the Jewish people.

(I think it worth noting, as an aside, that DNA "imaging" has proven that the genuine descendants of Aaron—those with ancient links to the Aaronic priesthood—even today, have the "purest" DNA of any yet discovered, more points of commonality, etc.)

Needless to say, if you want to really irritate a colony of noble and courageous Jewish warriors in seventh century Arabia, treating descendants of Aaron with a profound level of disrespect is a good place to start.

The inhabitants of Khaibar sent out messengers in all directions, to all the Jewish tribes as well as to others with whom they were friendly. They spread the news of the treacherous master of Medina, who had come to the city as a guest, had begged shelter and protection and had then exiled his hosts, robbed them of their possessions, and broken the pacts which he himself had proposed to them.

When you just, you know, write it out *cold*, like that, the Jews have a point, nu?

The Arabs, bedouins and Jews listened attentively, nodded their heads, and blamed the Prophet for his conduct. But when the messengers began to speak of revenge and war they shrugged their shoulders and said: "We are poor, simple bedouins. Why should we be concerned with your trouble? If we are to risk our lives, our camels and our horses, then promise us a portion of the booty and pay us a part of that portion in advance." The hatred of the pious people of Khaibar was so great that they pledged their date crops and sacrificed their money in order to secure the aid of the people of the desert.

But the Khaibar weren't content with just themselves and their Jewish allies and the bedouins of neighbouring tribes. And so it was

...a holy Jew, Khoyray, and with him Kinana ben Khakayk, Handja ibn Kais and the hanif *Abu Amir, mounted their horses and rode to Mecca. Upon their arrival, they went to Abu Sofyan and said, "O Abu Sofyan, your faith is better than the faith of Muhammad, and your sword is stronger than his. Let us fight together against Muhammad for we hate him as much as you do." And Abu Sofyan concluded an alliance with the Jews.*

From that moment on gold poured into the desert. The tribes arose and swore by all their old gods that they would destroy Muhammad.

It was an enormous army that set forth for Medina. Abu Sofyan led ten thousand men.

Meanwhile, in Medina

Muhammad heard of the approach of the large army through his followers who were secretly distributed throughout the desert. The news struck terror in the hearts of the people of Medina. They forgot the beautiful slaves and thought no longer of the forbidden or permitted pleasures of life. They thought only of the great army which was larger then all of the previous Arabian armies put together. Experienced warriors, great bandits, even Muhammad himself, were frightened. Muhammad knew that the city of God could not be vanquished but at the same time he thought of his own words: "First tie your camel to a tree and then entrust it to God's care." But where the tree was to which the camel was to be tied Muhammad did not know. All the means of war, all the defence methods which were known to the Arabs would be powerless against the gigantic army. It would be impossible to confront the enemy in open battle. One could fight in the narrow streets or seek shelter in the fortresses, but none of these means seemed to indicate salvation. Looking down from the fortresses, the city of Medina was entirely unprotected. There were no walls of fortification and one could only depend upon the natural protection of the hillsides, rocks, and precipices. Three sides of the city were protected in this fashion, but on the fourth side Medina lay wide open and bare to the enemy's attack. Obviously the army could have approached the city from the fourth side and no one knew how the city could defend itself. Fear, anguish and desperation reigned in Medina.

The "tree" to which Medina's "camel" needed to be tied came in the unexpected form of a Persian slave named Selman who had lived both in Persia and in Byzantium, and who had seen, first-hand, the army of the Emperor of Byzantium march in Iran, had watched the Zoroastrians besiege the ramparts of the Roman Empire. As he listened to Muhammad's plan for the defence of Medina, he inquired if the plan was the Word of God or Muhammad's own. It was a distinction the Prophet was never shy in acknowledging and about which he never lacked absolute clarity. In this case, the plan was entirely his own. Given that, Selman suggested digging a ditch—or, rather, The Ditch—from one of Medina's sheltering hills to another: straight across the only road leading into Medina. With everyone working day and night, this was accomplished and the scene was set for the Battle of The Ditch.

Slowly and confidently the army of ten thousand made its approach. Soon it saw the fortresses of Medina and began to tremble with delight at the thought of victory and plunder. Abu Sofyan rode ahead and examined the ground, when suddenly, from a distance, he saw something strange and confusing. When he had come closer he saw a wide ditch.

As if petrified he stood in front of the ditch. He was obviously shaken by the enemy's move. Behind its leader, the army of ten thousand stared as well and was equally puzzled. How was one to cross the ditch?

The soldiers looked at one another, shook their heads and were speechless. A ditch had never before been provided for in Arabian warfare. The army was hypnotized by the ditch just like a chicken by a chalk line.

Still indecisive, the tents were put up... what were ten thousand to do against a ditch? For them war meant fighting in an open field. Anything else was incomprehensible.

Day after day, Jews, Meccans and bedouins appeared at the edge of the ditch. They hurled insults at the army of the pious with all their might. "What sort of warriors are you," they thundered, "if you hide behind a ditch? Is this a war worthy of the Arabs? Did our fathers or our grandfathers fight like this? You are cowardly dogs and no Arabs! Come over here and show us what you can do!"

The Muslims didn't budge.

Now and again, a daring pagan attempted to climb over the ditch. They permitted him to cross only to kill him with much pride and ceremony. The days passed by with insults and the exchange of an occasional arrow. It was soon obvious that the huge army was filled with discontent, and there were good reasons for this. Confident of a swift and certain victory, Abu Sofyan had not hurried his campaign. He had waited until the pilgrims had left Mecca at the expiration of the Month of the Pilgrimage and until the harvest had been gathered in the fields of Medina. Now, when the siege had begun, he soon realized that the harvest was out of his reach and safely stored in Medina. The army of the ten thousand which had counted on the crops was without provisions. The bedouins, who had gone to war at considerable expense in the hope of quick and rich rewards, were forced to see their camels grow thin and they themselves wasting their time. The previous enthusiasm began to cool considerably.

Abu Sofyan, facing a debacle,

...determined to ally himself with the last of the Jewish tribes in Medina, the Banu Qoraidha who lived in a large fortress outside of the city. The Qoraidha, who were subjects of Muhammad, readily agreed to break their oath since the Prophet had broken his against the two other Jewish tribes of Medina, and they promised to attack Muhammad's army from the rear. Thereupon Abu Sofyan gave orders to prepare for the attack. The preparations lasted for days. When they had been completed, it happened that the day of the attack was a Saturday. The Banu Qoraidha and all the other Jewish tribes of the army declared that they could not possibly break the centuries-old laws of their fathers and take upon themselves the sin of fighting on a sabbath. When Abu Sofyan tried to move the Jews to participate in the attack, the Jews of Khaibar announced that, in their opinion, the whole campaign was a failure and that they for one had no desire of calling down the wrath of the Prophet upon their brothers in Medina by participating in the attack. Other tribes, who apparently had been influenced by Muhammad's secret agents, became equally disinterested. Conditions continued as they were for a few more days, a few skirmishes took place, and then the bedouins were fed up.

One day, heavy clouds covered the heavens, rain began to fall in torrents and a violent hurricane from the desert upset the tents of the nomads. The bedouins attributed this to Muhammad's magical power. They had no desire to, nor could they, fight against magic, particularly the magic of a coward. There was nothing for Abu Sofyan to do but withdraw with honour. He wrote a letter to Muhammad, accused him of cowardice and treachery against the old established traditions of war and swore that at the proper time he would return to take bloody vengeance. Then he got on his camel and gave orders for the return march.

This took place on 15 April 627.

If the fate of the Banu Nadhir had seemed more arduous than that of the Banu Qainoqa, the fate of the Banu Qorhaida—now abandoned by Abu Sofyan and his army of ten thousand—would make the fate of both their former tribes-mates seem like a tea party by comparison. Muhammad the bloodthirsty Arab was about to supersede Muhammad the Messenger of God for the last time:

Now the hour had come for the last Jewish tribe in Medina, the Banu Qoraidha. Muhammad had learned of their negotiations with the army of the Koreish and he was determined to settle with them. On the day on which Abu Sofyan gave up the siege of Medina, Muhammad and his soldiers marched to the fortress of the Qoraidha. Another siege began.

The Jews were unable to make any armed resistance. They had retreated to their stronghold and waited for what was to come. At the end of twenty-five days they surrendered unconditionally to the Prophet. They had hoped that they would be permitted to leave the city, as in the case of their brother tribes. But the Prophet was not at all inclined to be merciful. It was only upon the request of the Aws, who had long been friendly with the Qoraidha, that he decided to place the decision in the hands of an arbiter. The role was entrusted to a pious member of the Aws tribe, Sad ben Moadh.

Sad ben Moadh was a fat, full-blooded man given to choleric outbursts. He passed for a friend of the Jews. He had been injured in a skirmish which had taken place behind the ditch and now lay gravely wounded. The wound pained him and Sad knew that his days were numbered. Because of their alliance with the Koreish, he felt that the Jews alone were responsible for his death. With great care, the heavy, mortally wounded Sad was carried out of his tent, placed upon a donkey and surrounded with pillows. In this fashion he was led to the place where the decision was to be given. When he arrived, he demanded that the parties concerned agree unconditionally to his terms. The Jews were the first to swear and they did so gladly. Sad was an old friend upon whom they could count.

The dying man propped himself up in his saddle and delivered his judgement: "All the men of the Banu Qoraidha are to be executed and the women and children sold into slavery." Muhammad did not protest against the verdict. It was exactly in accordance with his wishes. On the other hand, he promised mercy to those who would become converted to Islam.

On the morning of the next day a deep grave was dug in the market place. The old cruel Orient was to intoxicate itself with blood in the center of the city of Medina. Islam showed its claws. One by one, the Jews were brought to the market place in chains, made to stand at the edge of the grave, and decapitated. Although the Jews of Medina had not known how to live courageously, they did know how to die bravely. Not a single one of the Banu Qoraidha betrayed his faith in order to save his life. They died silently and courageously. They saw their brothers being slain before their eyes and knew that their own heads were soon to follow.

Soon the grave was full. Blood ran over the market place. The Prophet and the leaders of Islam stood at one side. They watched the executions and said nothing. Worlds are born in blood. The day drew to a close and still Jews were brought to the place in chains. Soon it was night and the Prophet gave orders for torches to be brought so that the faithful could see the blood of the enemy being shed on the market place. In the middle of the blood-covered city, his face strangely lighted by the burning torches, stood Muhammad, the master, the messenger of God.

Among the Qoraidha there was a Jew named Zobayr who had once saved the life of the great

Moslem warrior, Thabit. Thabit recognized him among those condemned to death. "You were good to me and saved my life, O Zobayr," Thabit said to the Jew. "I will now reward the good which you did to me." He went to the Prophet and begged for Zobayr's life and asked that his family be permitted to retain their possessions. Since Thabit belonged to the tribe of the Aws and was a mighty warrior as well as a pious Muslim, Muhammad granted his request. Overjoyed, the warrior ran to Zobayr and brought him the good news. But the Jew said, "Lead me to the place of execution for I would like to follow my brothers who died there and those who are about to die. I do not wish to have my life spared by the blood-thirsty man who has slain all around me. The pail of my life has run empty and I am impatient to be reunited with my friends." Having spoken, the old Jew went to the place of execution where he was decapitated by Ali, for the cousin and the son-in-law of the Prophet acted as executioner on that bloody day. Zobayr the Jew was not forgotten by later generations. His actions were considered as exemplary of martyrdom by the Arab people and all the faithful. Among the people of the desert his memory is honoured to this day, for Islam was the first faith in which theologians and the church fathers were permitted to praise and admire the heroism of people not of their own faith.

This was the end of the Jews of Medina. Their faults had not been numerous. They protected themselves as well as they could, sought peace and were afraid of the power of the enemy. They had invented cruel jokes at the expense of the Prophet, sung impudent songs about him, listened to him only to contradict, and adhered rigidly to the faith which they brought with them from their old home. It was that which brought about their destruction. The Prophet could no longer tolerate their presence in the city where the word of Allah and his prophet reigned supreme. The Banu Qoraidha knew how to die courageously. Much of their cowardice in life was compensated by their death.

Medina, the city of the Prophet, was now the unified city of the faith where, no longer touched by the rude ridicule of the unbelievers, Muhammad could govern the great community of the Moslems.

In the aftermath of the Battle of The Ditch and the subsequent slaughter of the Banu Qoraidha—with the last of the immediate impediments to his absolute rule over Medina now removed, Muhammad came to recognize what he—evidently—saw as the largest impediment to the wider acceptance of Islam.

Something lay between the hearts of the people and the words of the Prophet. This something was Mecca. Mecca had been conquered, beaten, and humbled, and still it remained the queen of the desert, the greatest among all the cities. The heart of the desert still throbbed for the holy city of Mecca.

What was Muhammad for Mecca? A despot who, in a treacherous and sly manner, had assumed power in the distant province of Medina. Due to his astute cowardice, he had succeeded in defying the punitive expeditions of the Meccans and forcing his erroneous doctrines upon the city by means of brutal terror. Consequently they allowed him to remain in his desert oasis and did not bother with him any more than they did with the other local rulers who had come into power by chance. However, he made himself unpleasantly noticeable through his constant campaigns, which disturbed the peace of the country, harmed trade, and endangered the caravans. One had to be doubly careful and to increase the price of the wares to cover the risk. This was Mecca's opinion of the ruler of Medina.

But the opinions of the bedouins, the opinion of the simple people of the desert, was even worse. For them, Muhammad was covered with a dark and unremovable stain. He was a pariah, a man from whom his own tribe, his own city, his own family, had turned away. And the city was not an unimportant colony, the tribe was not an unimportant, unknown tribe; the city was Mecca, the queen of cities, and the tribe was the Koreish, the noblest tribe of Arabia. His native city had banished the Prophet, had vomited him out, consequently, thought the bedouins, there must be something wrong about his teaching, about his person. The respect for the great, holy city of the Kaaba was probably the only spiritual property which was ineradicably planted in the souls of the

bedouins. For centuries it had been the bedouin's custom to make pilgrimages to the Kaaba, and for centuries Mecca had been the central point of the world. He was accustomed to do that which Mecca did, and to condemn that which Mecca condemned. Now a man had come who fought Mecca and this man wooed the heart of the bedouins. The bedouins regarded him with distrust.

It was at this point that, either on his own or through the inspiration of God or the archangel Gabriel (the distinction, to me, is an important one upon which—again, to me—the future of Islam as it is practiced in the present day would hinge), Muhammad made a conscious choice to fuse Mecca and Islam into one entity insofar as he was capable of doing so, by announcing to the faithful of Medina—in the year 628—that he and fifteen hundred of his most devout followers would make the *hajj* from Medina to Mecca in that year.

It was a master stroke. The heretic who had violated the sacred months, who had fought the holiest of cities for years, now appeared as a contrite penitent and directed his steps towards the gates of the proud city which had once expelled him.

Only the holiest, the most fanatic of his followers, accompanied him. The adventurous, the war-like robbers, remained in Medina, for a holy pilgrimage which gave no promise of booty had no interest for them.

When word arrived in Mecca that Muhammad and fifteen hundred men were on their way from Medina, an army was quickly raised and led by Khalid ben al Walid to intercept the Prophet. To the Meccans' surprise they found—with the prescribed sacrificial animals—only fifteen hundred holy pilgrims, unarmed and humbly asking permission to enter the Sanctuary.

Permission was denied and—to the amazement of his followers—the Prophet accepted this. He remained at the oasis of Hodaibiya (appropriately lying half inside and half outside the sacred precincts) requesting only that a representative of the Koreish be sent to negotiate peace. After some delay, Soheil bin Amr, a minor Koreish functionary, was sent. The treaty they negotiated—between the Koreish and "Muhammad bin Abdallah (Soheil wouldn't permit him to describe himself in the document as "the Messenger of God")—specified:

War shall not be waged for ten years between them. During this time the members of both parties are not to be endangered by each other. They may not fight one another. If any member of the Koreish goes over to Muhammad, then Muhammad is obligated to return him to the Koreish. On the other hand, if one of Muhammad's followers goes over to the Koreish, then these are not obligated to return him. An honest understanding is to exist between both parties which excludes robbery and theft. The tribes of the country are to be permitted to join Muhammad or the Koreish at their own discretion. This year Muhammad may neither enter the sanctuary nor the holy city of Mecca. In the next year, Muhammad and his people may come unarmed to Mecca and, in the absence of the Koreish, perform their worship."

The pilgrims, as a compromise, sacrificed their animals at the oasis and then turned back to Medina. As Omar later said, "Only a miracle prevented the Muslims from deserting the Prophet on the Day of Hodaibiya," so great was their shame at Muhammad's humility and deference before the Koreish's minor functionary.

Muhammad alone knew that the signing of the treaty spelled the end of the Koreish's hold over Mecca.

In the two years which followed the signing of the treaty, more men were converted to Islam than had been the case since the beginning of the Prophet's mission.

The many tribes of Arabia made use of their—now contractually-sanctioned—right to declare themselves openly for or against Muhammad. Long caravans appeared at Medina, made their confession of faith and received the blessing of the Prophet. Muhammad carried out the terms of the treaty to the letter. So much so, that it was finally the Koreish who begged him not to take it too literally:

Abu Busir of the tribe of the Taqif who lived in Mecca one day discovered the desire for adventure and the love of God within himself, and fled to Medina. The Meccans learned of this and sent two warriors to Medina with the request that Abu Busir be returned to them in accordance with the terms of the treaty. Without hesitation, Muhammad granted their request and surrendered the fugitive. On the way, however, the captive managed to slay one of his guards and to escape into the desert. By means of begging and robbing, he lived in the desert where he was joined by others who, like him, had fled from Mecca and had been surrendered by the Prophet.

The slaves and the poor of the city of Mecca now fled in greater numbers to Medina where there was no poverty or slavery for the faithful. Under the leadership of Abu Busir, they made up a dangerous company of about seventy men. This band now sought out the great caravan route between Mecca and Syria as its arena and since its members were poor and had nothing to lose, they fell upon the great caravans in the name of Allah, robbed the property of the Meccans and spread fear and terror about them. The Meccans saw that they were being robbed of the fruits of their treaty. Once again the trade of Mecca was endangered. Abu Busir was both brave and sly, he knew how to hide in the rugged mountains and defied his pursuers. Muhammad merely shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, and declared that he could do nothing against the free Muslims who, according to the treaty, were not permitted to belong to his community. Finally, in order to restore peace in the desert, the Meccans were forced to ask Muhammad to revise the treaty of Hodaibiya and to take up the refugees officially in his community. To this Muhammad agreed, and from that day on the attacks and pillages ceased.

Now certain that he was fated to be the absolute ruler of the entire Arabian Peninsula, Muhammad set his sights on the countries and empires in his immediate vicinity, dispatching six messengers to the six greatest rulers of the neighbouring lands: The Emperor of Byzantium, the Emperor of Iran, the King of Abyssinia, the Governor of Egypt, the King of Hira and the Duke of Yamana. The new sense of inevitability which accompanied this awareness of his imminent preeminence over all he surveyed brought about a resurgence of statesmanlike softening in the prophet's approach to warfare. He publicly declared:

"Do not use trickery or treachery in the field. Do not kill children." "When in combat with the army of the enemy, do not oppress the peaceful inhabitants of the enemy's country. Spare the feeble among the women and be compassionate to the sucklings and the sick. Do not destroy the houses of the inhabitants and do not damage their gardens, fields, and palm trees."

If I wasn't certain that it was a waste of time, I'd like to send an engraved copy of that to Yasser Arafat, along with a copy of Abu Bakr's instructions to the Muslim commander of the faithful when, during his reign as Caliph, he sent them against the Christian Empire of Byzantium:

"Do not oppress the people and do not excite them unnecessarily. Only do that which is good and right and success will reward you. When you meet an enemy, then fight him courageously, but if you win the battle do not kill women or children, spare the fields and the houses for men have erected them. If you conclude a treaty, then keep it. In the land of the Christians you will meet pious men on your way, who serve God in the churches and convents. Do not harm them and do not destroy the churches and convents."

Even when settling his score against the Khaibar, the colony which had united Jews and the Koreish in the Battle of The Ditch, Muhammad this time only conquered them militarily, seized their lands and (after extracting from them a promise of half their income for the Muslim State treasury) gave them back all of their property. A Draconian measure, to be sure, but in light of the fate of the Banu Qoraidha, the Jews of Khaibar probably figured that half of their income wasn't such a bad deal, all things considered. The universal (universal in the Arabian Peninsula, anyway) Muslim State was largely financed in this fashion after 628: on prohibitive taxes levied against Jews and Christians and other non-Muslims.

On the one hand, they paid a lot more tax, on the other hand they weren't required to serve in the army of the faithful. You know: take it or take it (nothing new for the Jews there). "I guess we'll take it."

There still remained the (now) minor problem of the Koreish, which Muhammad addressed in three stages. First, after his treaty-protected *hajj* in the year 629 (he and his followers were granted three days within the Sanctuary on their own), the Prophet married Maimuna bint Hares, the favourite aunt of Khalid ben al Walid, the brilliant Koreish cavalry commander who had handed Muhammad Islam's only military defeat at Badr. Khalid's best friend, in turn, was Amr ben el Asi, the only other military commander who posed a threat to Muhammad and Islam.

Together with his new Uncle-in-Law, Muhammad, Khalid and his friend Amr rode out of the city of Mecca, united in blood fellowship and (consequently) unshakeable allies.

Second, Muhammad waited for a pretext to break the Treaty of Hodaibiya, which came when a handful of Meccans attacked some Muslim allies in the desert. Insignificant in itself, but it allowed Muhammad to announce his military campaign against Mecca.

Now it was the Koreish who were isolated, the historical tide and momentum having turned against them. Small wonder that the Koreish decided to send someone higher than a mere functionary for this particular set of negotiations. Or, rather, "negotiations". The Koreish elected to send their leader this time: Abu Sofyan.

...The rich banker thought that his peaceful appearance in Medina would suffice to reawaken the former respect for the house of the Ommaya in the breasts of Muhammad and all the fugitives. A handshake, a courteous smile, a few pleasant words would surely be sufficient. Abu Sofyan felt like a noble lord who, in temporary embarrassment, had to turn to a simple peasant for aid.

Having arrived in Medina, Abu Sofyan was kept waiting uneasily for hours before he was led into the presence of Muhammad. The Prophet sat in the courtyard of the mosque. He hardly returned the greeting of the fashionable Ommaya.

Sofyan began to make a long speech, suggested that the friendship between Medina and Mecca be augmented, excused himself in the name of the city for the painful hostile occurrence and declared himself ready to revise the treaty of Hodaibiya, or what was more, even to accede to some of the Prophet's demands.

The Prophet looked at Abu Sofyan for a time, slowly arose and, without saying a word, left the mosque.

Abu Sofyan began to realize that the name of the Ommaya was not a welcome one in Medina.

Heavy at heart, Abu Sofyan decided to continue his labours. He had enough friends and blood-relatives in Medina. They were surely calmer than the obstinate prophet. They would in all probability be more receptive to sensible words.

Abu Sofyan now ran from one person to another, knocked on every door, recalled old friendships and relationships, but on all sides he met with a cool reception. His own daughter, who now belonged to the harem of the Prophet, showed him, "the unclean idolater," the door. Abu Bakr, his one-time friend and equal, had no word left for him. But Omar told him abruptly and frankly: "By God, if I had nothing but a few ants to command, I would never cease fighting you." Even Ali, who could never deny anyone anything, rejected him, saying: "Muhammad has come to a decision and we can do nothing about it." There was no room for doubt in Abu Sofyan's mind as to what that decision might be. He saddled his camel and rode to Mecca. When, exhausted from his trip, he had returned home and had told his wife, Hind, the results of his mission, she listened to him quietly. But when he wished to lay down beside her, she pushed him out of bed with her feet crying: "I will not share my bed with a coward."

Fear and confusion reigned in Mecca. The merchants were split up into numerous parties. They tried to convince themselves that Muhammad was not as yet ready, that he had no intention of marching against Mecca, and that, above all else, he would not dare touch the holy Kaaba. They were still discussing and pondering in this fashion when Muhammad had already taken up his position behind the hills near Mecca.

Ten thousand marched through the desert and their leader was the messenger of God.

The army travelled through uninhabited, empty places and yet the Prophet would not permit them to light a fire, to beat a drum or to sing pious songs. Noiselessly, silently, like a train of shadows, the ten thousand moved through the desert.

Halfway, Muhammad spied a rider behind a hilltop. Filled with amazement, Muhammad recognized his uncle, El Abbas [who] *knelt down and became converted to Islam. El Abbas had delayed long enough until God had finally made him see clearly as to his nephew's mission. For this reason Muhammad despised him thoroughly. "You are the last of the emigrants," he said ironically.*

Unmoved, he marched forward until he could finally see the square sanctuary of the Kaaba in the distance. For the first time, the army of the Prophet came to a halt, bivouac fires were lighted, for now everyone in Mecca was to know: the army of the Prophet lies at the door.

Humbly Abu Sofyan rode to the camp of the prophet. The first to recognize him was Omar. Omar took hold of him by the collar, dragged him into the presence of Muhammad and cried: "O messenger of God, here is Abu Sofyan who, not protected by any treaty, has fallen into our hands through the help of God. Permit me to slit his throat." Muhammad gave orders that Abu Sofyan was to be kept safely and brought before him again on the next day.

When he had again appeared before the Prophet, he was received with the words: "Woe to you, Abu Sofyan, do you not realize that there is no god but God?" The proud member of the Ommaya fell at the feet of Muhammad and said: "O Muhammad, you are dearer to me than father and mother. How mild, how gentle, how noble you are! I really believe that God is the only god for otherwise the others might have been of some help." "Woe to you, Abu Sofyan," Muhammad replied, "do you not acknowledge that I am the messenger of God?" This was decidedly too much for old Abu Sofyan: to be called upon to acknowledge Muhammad publicly. Again the Ommaya fell on his knees and spoke: "O Muhammad, you are dearer to me than all which I possess, I love you more than father and mother, but as far as your being a prophet is concerned, my spirit is not convinced of that."

Omar, who stood next to the Prophet, cried out: "There is no better argument than the sword to convince stubborn unbelievers." Thereupon he drew his sword form its sheath, turned to Abu Sofyan and said: "Accept the truth or I will sever your head from your body." Then Abu Sofyan knelt down, became converted to Islam, and recited the act of faith: "Achadou an la illah il Allah, achadou anna Muhammadon Rasul Allah" *(I believe that there is no god but God, I believe that Muhammad is His Messenger).*

Abu Sofyan hurried back to Mecca, assembled the Koreish, and told them what he had seen and experienced. The fashionable bankers were depressed. Only Hind, who had been present at the assembly, arose and with her face distorted with anger snatched her husband's beard and cried: "Kill this dirty, useless worm who brings shame upon us." Only a few of the Koreish were inclined to fight.

The rest joyfully accepted the terms of peace which Abu Sofyan had brought them from Muhammad. The terms were: "Muhammad will occupy the city of Mecca for all time. But the

Koreish who remain peacefully in their houses when the Prophet makes his entrance may be sure of their lives."

On the next day, the triumphal march into Mecca began. Only a small company of heathen led by the son of Abu Jahl offered any resistance, and they were conquered with ease. The way to Mecca, the way to the most brilliant of the cities, to the favourite treasure of Allah, was open. The Medinese had begun to celebrate their victory, and the ansari *Sad ben Abada shouted out: "Today is the day of the battle, today the sanctuary will be defiled."*

No one doubted but that the day of the great revenge had come, that the richest among the cities of Arabia was to be pillaged, that the enemies of the Prophet were to be destroyed, and that with this, the great act of the combining of all Arabia would be complete. But Muhammad and the oldest among the mohajirun *thought differently. They themselves had come from Mecca. Their love belonged to the city. Every stone, every street, every corner of Mecca was familiar to them and dear because of their many memories. Suddenly they all felt that they were Koreishites again, and the pride of the ancient race awakened in them. Never had the noble city of Mecca been pillaged by strangers, and not even now was a strange army to leave the city laden with plunder. In the long years of their exile, the* mohajirun *had retained something which no emigration before or after them had retained, their love for their native city.*

With wise forethought, Muhammad had only permitted the mohajirun, *Meccans by birth, to lead the army on that day. On the day following that in which the enemy had been conquered, the messenger of God put on the robes of a pilgrim, mounted a snow-white camel and, accompanied by Abu Bakr, rode towards Mecca. When he had reached the outskirts of the city, the first rays of the sun began to appear. They surrounded Muhammad's head like a halo. The streets of Mecca lay dead and empty of men. The inhabitants had hidden in their houses in fear. No one knew the plans of the Prophet. No one knew if he would spare the fortresses.*

Muhammad rode through the streets of Mecca. To his right rose the house of Khadija in which he had spent the happiest years of his life. Unseeing he rode past it. He rode straight ahead to the great courtyard of the Kaaba. And there Muhammad performed the deed for which he had once left home, family, and the holy courtyard of the Kaaba itself. Seven times he circled the Kaaba, seven times he reverently touched the holy stone with his staff. And then there happened to Muhammad, the messenger of God, the greatest event of his entire life. He got down from his camel, and with his head held high he began to break the idols of stone and wood with his staff. The Muslims followed his example. Soon the mighty Hobal, the three moon virgins, and all the three hundred and sixty idols lay in the dust. The deed, which Muhammad had announced years before, had been accomplished.

As is usual, the newly made converts were the most active against the old gods. Khalid ben el Walid and Amr ben el Asi raced with their riders through the entire sanctuary. They forced their way into the temples and the sacred fields of the Arabs, smashed the statues of the gods, and killed the few priests who still resisted. Soon nowhere in Mecca nor in any other portion of the sacred territory was a single idol to be found. Even the statues of Abraham and Ishmael were destroyed, and the picture of the Virgin Mary as well, out of "respect for their sanctity," as Muhammad said. An artfully carved wooden dove was broken with Muhammad's own hands.

The signal to commence the pillage did not follow the destruction of the gods as had been expected. Their property was not taken from the Koreish, a fact which displeased even some of the mohajirun. *When they had been driven out of Mecca, their property had been seized by the Meccans. Now after the final siege, they felt they were at least entitled to the return of their confiscated property. But Muhammad forbade that as well. He himself did not demand the return of any of his former property. He did not enter into the house of Khadija. During his entire stay in Mecca he lived in a tent.*

Next: Muhammad's wives, the Mothers of the Faithful, Aisha, his favourite wife. Islam after the death of the Prophet. Modern Islam and an examination of the conflict in the Middle East.

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